

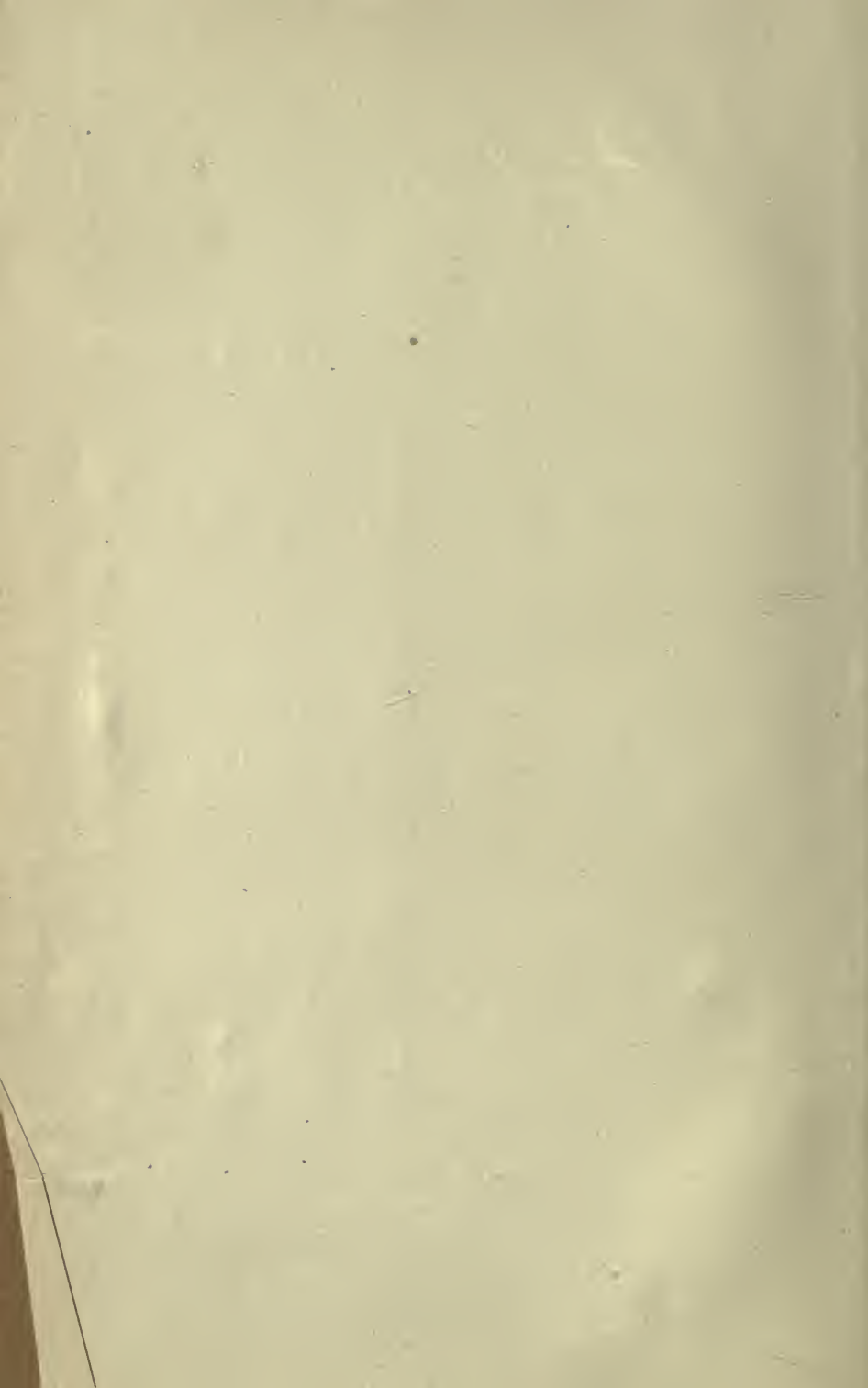
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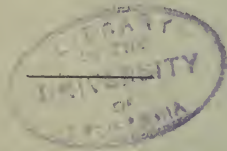
THE PHILOSOPHY OF ERNEST RENAN

BY

HERMAN G. A. BRAUER, M. A.

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, 1902

(Reprinted from the Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin,
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MADISON, WISCONSIN

OCTOBER, 1903

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MADISON, WISCONSIN

OCTOBER, 1903

1914
Jan 1st

To My Dear Mother

FROM WHOM I HAVE ALL THAT IS BEST IN MY LIFE

I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK

A TRIBUTE OF LOVE

AND ESTEEM



THE PHILOSOPHY OF ERNEST RENAN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"Renan peut être défini d'un seul mot, qui, heureusement, n'est pas une formule: ce fut l'homme le plus intelligent du XIXe siècle." Émile Faguet, in the *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature française*, Paris, 1899, tome VIII, pp. 397. Cf. Monod: Renan, etc., 40, 48.*

"Personne n'a parlé de nos jours un français plus savant à la fois et plus simple, plus limpide, plus sincère, à travers lequel s'aperçoit mieux la pensée." Gaston Boissier, *L'Académie Française, Recueil des Discours, Rapports et Pièces diverses*, tome I, p. 808.

On the two qualities emphasized in these judgments the fame of Renan chiefly rests: the clearness, simplicity and sincerity of his matchless prose, and the extraordinary fertility and comprehensive culture of his many-sided mind. In this paper it is from the side of his thought, and not of his style, that he is approached.

A study of Renan as a philosophic thinker would seem to reveal a third quality in respect of which he stands unexcelled, if not unequalled, in the century just closed. If it is true that he was the most intelligent man of the nineteenth century, it certainly is true no less that he was the most inconsistent. Even more remarkable than his wonderful fertility in ideas is the amazing incongruity of these ideas among themselves. Lest this should seem an exaggeration, I hasten to adduce his

*For this and all other abbreviations see Appendix C, page 378.

own testimony in support of these statements. That Renan was abundantly aware of the many contradictions in his writings, the following passage alone would sufficiently prove.

"Bon gré, mal gré, et nonobstant tous mes efforts consciencieux en sens contraire, j'étais prédestiné à être ce que je suis, un romantique protestant contre le romantisme, un utopiste prêchant en politique le terre-à-terre, un idéaliste se donnant inutilement beaucoup de mal pour paraître bourgeois, un tissu de contradictions, rappelant *l'hircocerv* de la scolastique, qui avait deux natures. Une de mes moitiés devait être occupée à démolir l'autre, comme cet animal fabuleux de Ctésias qui se mangeait les pattes sans s'en douter." Souv.,* 73. Cf. *Ibid.*, 62, 116-7.

This confession is amply endorsed by a careful study of Renan's writings, except perhaps the phrase: "nonobstant tous mes efforts consciencieux en sens contraire," which certainly does not accord very well with the following statement, written about the same time, and in which he seems rather to glory in his very inconsistencies:

"*In utrumque paratus!* Être prêt à tout, voilà peut-être la sagesse. S'abandonner, suivant les heures, à la confiance, au scepticisme, à l'optimisme, à l'ironie, voilà le moyen d'être sûr qu'au moins par moments on a été dans le vrai." F. Dét., 396. Cf. A. S., 43. Similar utterances abound in his books, especially those of the later period.

Such cavalierly indifference to logic might seem at first sight to be only an expression of certain moods in his later phase, when experience had shown that his "efforts consciencieux" at consistency remained stubbornly fruitless. But such an explanation is forbidden by the facts. For nowhere is the inconsistency of his opposite ideals more frankly avowed, or the policy of alternative contradictory assertion more deliberately embraced, than in his earliest writings.

As early as 1845, for example, in a personal letter, he says:

"J'ai pris là-dessus franchement mon parti; je me suis débarrassé du joug importun de la conséquence, au moins provisoirement. Dieu me condamnera-t-il pour avoir admis simulta-

nément ce que réclament simultanément mes différentes facultés, quoique je ne puisse concilier leurs exigences contraires?" *Souv.*, 321.

This casting aside of the importunate fetters of logic, reluctantly accepted in this letter as a provisional compromise, was destined soon to become a settled policy. Three years later, in the *Avenir de la Science*, the impossibility of expressing the whole truth within the limits of logical consistency, is already proclaimed in a very different tone:

"Le premier pas de celui qui veut penser est de s'enhardir aux contradictions, laissant à l'avenir le soin de tout concilier. Un homme conséquent dans son système de vie est certainement un esprit étroit. Car je le défie, dans l'état actuel de l'esprit humain, de faire concorder tous les éléments de la nature humaine. S'il veut un système tout d'une pièce, il sera donc réduit à nier et exclure." *A. S.*, 100.

The unhesitating firmness of tone in this passage, when contrasted with the apologetic timidity of his earlier statements, seems to indicate a more settled conviction. Unwilling compulsion has already become deliberate choice.

The same position is reaffirmed in his first published book, *L'Averroës et l'averroïsme*, 1852:

"L'inconséquence est un élément essentiel de toutes les choses humaines. La logique mène aux abîmes. Qui peut sonder l'indiscernable mystère de sa propre conscience, et, dans le grand chaos de la vie humaine, quelle raison sait au juste où s'arrêtent ses chances de bien voir et son droit d'affirmer?" *Averr.*, 170. Cf. *ibid.*, X.

Renan does not mean of course to advocate a systematic disregard of logical rules as such. He merely contends that the various "faculties" and "capacities" of what we call human nature habitually and spontaneously, and perhaps inevitably, tend to affirm propositions and imply points of view which cannot be brought into logical accord with each other. A few typical passages from his later books will help to make clear his meaning, and incidentally show how deliberately and persist-

ently this indifference to self-contradiction prevailed in his own practice.

In his *Discours de réception* before the *Académie Française*, 1878, he says:

"J'estime qu'il est des sujets sur lesquels il est bon de se contredire; car aucune vue partielle n'en saurait épuiser les intimes replis. Les vérités de la conscience sont des phares à feux changeants. A certaines heures, ces vérités paraissent évidentes; puis, on s'étonne qu'on ait pu y croire. . . Vingt fois l'humanité les a niées et affirmées; vingt fois l'humanité les niera et les affirmera encore." Disc., 41-2.

And two years later, in his address before the Royal Society of London, speaking of Marcus Aurelius:

"Il vit bien que lorsqu'il s'agit de l'infini aucune formule n'est absolue, et qu'en pareille matière on n'a quelque chance d'avoir aperçu la vérité une fois en sa vie que si l'on s'est beaucoup contredit." C. d'Angl., 237-8.

In his Introduction to the *Book of Job* and his Essay on *Ecclesiastes*, once more, he declares that consistency, in matters of metaphysical speculation, is a mark of pedantry and narrowness, and inconsistency rather a sign of truth:

"La question que l'auteur se propose est précisément celle que tout penseur agite, sans pouvoir la résoudre; ses embarras, ses inquiétudes, cette façon de retourner dans tous les sens le noeud fatal sans en trouver l'issue, renferment bien plus de philosophie que la scolastique tranchante qui prétend imposer silence aux doutes de la raison par des réponses d'une apparente clarté. La contradiction, en de pareilles matières, est le signe de la vérité." Job, LXVII. Cf. Dr. Ph., 176.

"Malheur à qui ne se contredit pas au moins une fois par jour. On ne fut jamais plus éloigné du pédantisme que l'auteur de l'Ecclesiaste. La vue claire d'une vérité ne l'empêche pas de voir, tout de suite après, la vérité contraire, avec la même clarté." Eccl., 24.

I have purposely quoted at length from Renan's own words, in order to leave no doubt that he was quite aware of the many

inconsistencies in his own writings, and that he was rather proud than otherwise of their presence.

When a writer thus boldly admits logical contradictions among his first principles, it of course becomes a difficult task to exhibit his thoughts in coherent form. "Abandon logic all who enter here," might be written over the entrance of Renan's temple of philosophic truth.

In the present instance this difficulty of exposition is increased by the fact that many of his characteristic doctrines are most clearly developed in his *Dialogues* and his *Drames Philosophiques*; but he expressly declines to be held responsible for the opinions professed by his interlocutors:

"Je me résigne d'avance à ce que l'on m'attribue directement toutes les opinions professées par mes interlocuteurs, même quand elles sont contradictoires. Je n'écris que pour des lecteurs intelligents et éclairés. Ceux-là admettront parfaitement que je n'aie nulle solidarité avec mes personnages et que je ne doive porter la responsabilité d'aucune des opinions qu'ils expriment." Dial., VII. Cf. Dr. Ph., 257; Souv., 377.

From most writers such a disclaimer would be entirely reasonable, or rather unnecessary. But Renan, surely, should be the last of all men to repudiate opinions professed in his dramas merely on the ground of their contradicting each other; and to absolve him from responsibility for those opinions, on that ground alone, would seem to be going counter to his own professed principles.

But there is, in fact, a special reason, in his case, for insisting on this responsibility. It would not be hard to show that every doctrine of importance developed in the *Dialogues* and the *Drames Philosophiques* is put forward elsewhere in his writings, explicitly or implicitly, by himself directly. Cf. Séailles, E. R., 280-1.

The following example is typical. In his preface to the *Prêtre de Nemi*, he complains that certain critics have imputed to him the subversive doctrines of Ganeu, the least attractive character in the play, to whom he himself refers in the same connection as "le vil coquin."

"J'ai mis en scène Ganeo, 'le vil coquin,' trouvant un disciple digne de lui dans Leporinus, et lui enseignant la dernière conséquence de l'égoïsme, la lâcheté. C'est la doctrine de Ganeo qu'on a présentée comme la mienne. J'aurais prêché justement ce dont j'ai voulu inspirer le mépris! C'est comme si l'on soutenait que les Spartiates montraient des esclaves ivres à leurs enfants, non pour les leur faire prendre en horreur, mais pour les engager à les imiter." Dr. Ph., 259.

Now what is this doctrine of Ganeo, so indignantly repudiated by Renan? Briefly this: that courage in battle is frequently punished by death, and cowardice rewarded by escape from death; the brave man dies on the field while cowards at home enjoy the fruits of his bravery.

"La lâcheté est presque toujours récompensée; quant au courage, c'est une vertu qui est le plus souvent punie de la peine de mort."

"N'est-ce pas?" continues Ganeo, "Le vrai vainqueur, c'est celui qui se sauve. Vaincre, c'est ne pas se faire tuer. On a l'air de supposer que le vainqueur mort jouit de sa victoire. Mais il n'en sait rien. Les honneurs qu'on rend à son cadavre, c'est comme si on les rendait à un tronc d'arbre."

"Mais on dit que les dieux aiment les braves," objects Leporinus.

"Tant mieux pour les dieux," retorts Ganeo, "s'il y en a. 'J'aime mieux ma peau que l'amour des dieux. Avec l'amour des dieux, on pourrit bel et bien sous terre.'"

"On a aussi l'estime des hommes."

"Oui, l'estime de vos deux voisins de rang, à condition qu'ils n'aient pas été tués comme vous."

"Mais il y a la nation."

"Ah! si je te disais que la nation aussi a intérêt à être vaincue. Malheur à la nation victorieuse.' . . . Le vainqueur est le pire des maîtres, le plus opposé aux réformes. C'est au lendemain d'une défaite qu'une nation fait des progrès. C'est au lendemain d'une défaite que l'on est libre, heureux. Dieu nous préserve de la victoire! . . . Eh bien,

réfléchis donc, mon cher. A moins de conserver l'immortalité de l'âme pour les militaires, l'essentiel, dans une bataille, est de se sauver." . . . La mort est la faute irréparable. . . ." Dr. Ph., 355-358.

Embarrassing reflections, truly; reflections which, encouraged by the authoritative pen of M. l'Administrateur du Collège de France, might well provoke objections from French patriots. But in what respect does Ganeo's doctrine differ from the following declaration, published by our author himself fourteen years earlier?

"L'intérêt personnel ne conseille jamais le courage militaire; car aucun des inconvénients qu'on encourt par la lâcheté n'équivaut à ce que l'on risque par le courage. Il faut, pour exposer sa vie, la foi à quelque chose d'immatériel. Or, cette foi disparaît de jour en jour." Réf. Int., 116. Cf. Dr. Ph., 258.

What effort did Renan ever make, one cannot help wondering, to encourage men's faith in a future life?

The further assertion of Ganeo, that individual welfare is not necessarily proportioned to national strength, is likewise endorsed by Renan directly:

"Le gouvernement représentative est établi presque partout. Mais des signes évidents de la fatigue causée par les charges nationales se montrent à l'horizon. Le patriotisme devient local; l'entraînement national diminue. . . Dans cinquante ans le principe national sera en baisse. . . Il est devenu trop clair, en effet, que le bonheur de l'individu n'est pas en proportion de la grandeur de la nation à laquelle il appartient. . . ." A. S., XV-XVI.

The truth is that Renan's disavowal of the teachings of his interlocutors whenever they contradict his own, must be regarded as adding another contradiction to the number, for in point of fact they never do contradict him. The opposite points of view which these characters are usually made to espouse, in reality represent the opposite conceptions of the two lobes of his own brain. His very reason, indeed, for giving to his thoughts the form of a dialogue was because in this way,

as he himself says, he could best give expression to his own two-sided philosophic beliefs.

"Privé de mes livres et séparé de mes travaux," he writes in the preface to his *Dialogues philosophiques*, "j'employais ces loisirs forcés à faire un retour sur moi-même et à dresser une sorte d'état sommaire de mes croyances philosophiques. La forme du dialogue me parut bonne pour cela, parce qu'elle n'a rien de dogmatique et qu'elle permet de présenter successivement les diverses faces du problème, sans que l'on soit obligé de conclure. Moins que jamais je me sens l'audace de parler doctrinalement en pareille matière." Dial., V-VI.

But on the next page in the same preface he writes:

"Chacun de ces personnages représente . . . les côtés successifs d'une pensée libre; aucun d'eux n'est un pseudonyme que j'aurais choisi . . . pour exposer mon propre sentiment."

These statements, taken both together, can only mean that, while each of his interlocutors represents a certain phase of Renan's own doctrine, no one of them represents that doctrine completely. And this is true. Any one of his characters, taken alone, would certainly misrepresent Renan's position. But the misrepresentation would be due not to a real contradiction, but rather to the consistent advocacy of a single phase of the question at any one time.

In view of our author's protest, however, the *Dialogues* and the *Drames philosophiques* are quoted in this paper only as confirming positions taken by the author elsewhere, which they often express more briefly and more clearly.

Few men have been more written about, by friends and by foes, than Renan. All the eminent literary critics, and many others, have had their say; and several biographers have told the story of his life. A list of these works will be found in Appendix B.

The most elaborate attempt yet made to explain, from a psychological point of view, the complex personality of Renan, and the many contradictions in his writings resulting therefrom, is

that of M. Gabriel Séailles: Ernest Renan, *Essai de Biographie psychologique*, 2^e édition, Paris, 1895.

This writer tries to show that Renan's inconsistencies are the logical outcome of his rejection of metaphysics, and his exclusive reliance upon the experimental method.

"Renan attend tout de la science, il n'y a pas une vérité qui ne vienne d'elle, il lui demande non seulement les faits et les lois, mais, plus hardi qu'A. Comte, l'idée qui domine les faits et coordonne les lois à la fin idéale de l'univers. . . . Il était bon que cette expérience fût faite, et en un sens elle a été faite pour tous. L'échec de Renan n'est pas un accident, il est le terme logique d'une philosophie qui se réduit à l'histoire, demande aux faits eux-mêmes l'intelligence des faits, et devant leurs démentis ne peut que renoncer à elle-même et désespérer. . . . La vie intellectuelle de Renan est une expérience faite pour tous, elle nous apprend où la logique conduit un esprit sincère qui, résolu à suivre la vérité jusqu'au bout, l'attend du seul témoignage des faits." E. R., VIII, 341.

My own opinion is that M. Séailles is trying too hard to refer to a single cause what in truth was due to the cooperation of a great many; and that, moreover, he has approached his author too exclusively from the intellectual side. It was not so much Renan's rejection of metaphysics,—indeed, he did not reject it in the sweeping manner assumed by M. Séailles—but rather his heterogeneous temperament; not his adherence to the experimental method, but rather his frequent and capricious departure from that method, that furnished the principal source of the puzzling contradictions in his philosophical writings. But further discussion of this point must be reserved for a later chapter.

An explanation seems called for in regard to the form of the exposition here attempted. After bringing together and comparing with one another all Renan's utterances on the various topics discussed, his contradictions were found to be so bold and so unceasing, that it seemed impossible to avoid misrepresentation, or to convey anything like a true idea of the

nature of his mind, except by exhibiting his own statements side by side, and making discussion and criticism incidental.

This mode of exposition will of course not lend itself well to continuous narrative, and is certain for that reason to prove less attractive to the reader; but it seemed the only way to avoid arbitrary exclusions. Moreover, this method has the advantage of presenting Renan's views mainly in his own words, and thus provides at least, in convenient groupings, materials for a more detailed study of the subject at some future time. The topics are accordingly grouped under three heads: Nature, Man, Society. Under the first will be found Renan's ideas on such questions as evolution vs. special creation, law and miracle; materialism and spiritualism; theism, pantheism, agnosticism and positivism. In the other two divisions are presented his views on certain questions in ethics and politics respectively. The concluding chapter suggests the direction in which we must turn for a knowledge of the psychological factors involved in the production of his heterogeneous personality.

CHAPTER II.

NATURE.

✓ Of Renan's nature-philosophy, in the sense just described, the most characteristic feature is its thorough-going evolutionism. As early as 1845, fourteen years before the publication of the *Origin of Species*, he had quite abandoned the special-creation hypothesis, and adopted instead, at least within the limits of his own specialty, the principle of gradual evolution in accordance with natural law. Souv., 251.

At least as early as 1848 also, he had developed a formula for evolution in general, recalling that which has since become famous in the wording of Herbert Spencer. It may help the comparison to place the two side by side. Mr. Spencer's well-known formula runs thus:

"Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity, to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation." First Principles, §145.

Renan's conception is not expressed in such definite terms; it is less abstract, but also less concise and less comprehensive, being restricted to living forms. He writes in 1848:

"Evolution d'un germe primitif et syncrétique par l'analyse de ses membres, et nouvelle unité résultant de cette analyse, telle est la loi de tout ce qui vit. Un germe est posé, renfermant en puissance, sans distinction, tout ce que l'être sera un jour; le germe se développe, les formes se constituent dans leurs proportions régulières . . . Mais rien ne se crée, rien ne s'ajoute. Je me suis souvent servi avec succès de la comparaison suivante pour faire comprendre cette vue. Soit

une masse de chanvre homogène, que l'on tire en cordelles distinctes; la masse représentera le syncrétisme, où coexistent confusément tous les instincts; les cordelles représenteront l'analyse. Si l'on suppose que les cordelles, tout en restant distinctes, soient ensuite entrelacées pour former une corde, on aura la synthèse, qui diffère du syncrétisme primitif, en ce que les individualités bien que nouées en unité y restent distinctes." A. S., 313.

This conception is applied by Renan to the evolution of the human mind, as represented in languages, literatures and religions; and, in a more hypothetical way, to cosmic evolution at large. See A. S., 301-318. Herder, Michelet, and Cousin are frequently mentioned by him in connection with these views.

So extreme was Renan's enthusiasm for evolutionary science in this early period of his life that, had he been free to devote himself to biology instead of theology, as he often declared in later days, he would probably have anticipated some of the demonstrations of Darwin. Souv., 262-3. He was forced into other fields, however; and so, instead of an *Origines des Espèces*, it was *Les Origines du Christianisme* which established his fame in the world.

Writing nearly half a century later of his views in the forties:

"J'avais un sentiment juste de ce que j'appellais les origines de la vie. Je voyais bien que tout se fait dans l'humanité et dans la nature, que la création n'a pas de place dans la série des effets et des causes. Trop peu naturaliste pour suivre les voies de la vie dans le labyrinthe que nous voyons sans le voir, j'étais évolutionniste décidé en tout ce qui concerne les produits de l'humanité, langues, écritures, littératures, législations, formes sociales. J'entrevois que le damier morphologique des espèces végétales et animales est bien l'indice d'une genèse, que tout est né selon un dessein dont nous voyons l'obscur canevas." A. S., XII-XIII. Cf. *ibid.*, 170-2.

But the truth is that Renan and Darwin approached the problem from entirely different points of view. Consistently with his clerical antecedents, Renan approached the question of evo-

lution from the side of its theological and religious significance. To his mind, at least in the earlier period, the assertion of evolution was primarily a denial of the biblical account of creation, and of all the theological dogmas thence derived.

✓ In a world governed by natural law,—this is the very keystone of his nature-philosophy—supernatural agencies have no place. In the endless chain of cause and effect which formed his conception of nature, each event is bound to its neighbor by a tie of internal necessity which is never broken through by interpositions of a supernatural or extra-natural power. Dial., 162; Or. Lang., 241.

“Une chose absolument hors de doute, c’est que, dans l’univers accessible à notre expérience, on n’observe et on n’a jamais observé aucun fait passager provenant d’une volonté ni de volontés supérieures à celle de l’homme.” F. Dét., 402; also 406.

This conviction dates back as far as 1846, and was apparently formed under the influence of, or at least in co-operation with, his friend M. Berthelot. In all his life Renan never again changed from this position. Souv., 337-8; also, 371-2.

Neither is there any such thing as intentional action to be discovered in the operations of Nature. Whatever may be true of the government of the universe as a whole, in the details of this planet, if we except the actions of finite beings, there is no such thing as intelligently directed action; nor ever has been, so far as man can ascertain. The unerring precision and absolute constancy of natural law, making it possible to predict results from a given combination of known materials and forces, is alone sufficient ground, he affirms, for discarding the idea of intelligent or intentional action in the workings of Nature.

“Le caractère de précision absolue du monde que nous appelons matériel suffirait à éloigner l’idée d’intention; l’intentionnel se trahissant presque toujours par le manque de géométrie et l’à-peu-près.” F. Dét., 404. Cf. Or. Lang., 241.

In the present state of the universe, intelligence is restricted to a middle region: both above and below finite minds, all is night. There is no evidence that our planet has ever been in-

fluenced by any rational being higher than man. A God, in the ordinary sense of the word, a living, acting God, a *Providence*, is nowhere discernible. F. Dét., 406-7. And this absence of purposive action may be affirmed without hesitation, he declares, of the entire solar system, and even of the whole universe, so far as planetary motions are concerned. There is no reasonable doubt that the other celestial bodies likewise follow laws of development inherent in their own constitution. At any rate, the *onus probandi* rests upon those who deny this.¹ F. Dét., 405.

Renan does not mean to assert that a conscious ruler of the world does not exist; but merely that no such influence is discernible in the details of the world's government over that portion of space and time which man can investigate. Dial., 20. In other worlds or other ages, interventions by outside powers may possibly occur. It may well be that, compared with the totality of things, the portion of the universe accessible to the observations of man is a mere point; and what is true of this point, need not, of course, be true of the whole. At all events, with respect to the totality of things, it would be as rash to deny as to affirm intervention by superior powers. Dial., 22; F. Dét., 417.

The same course of reasoning applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to infinite time. Between our phenomenal universe, which we know is not eternal, and the primordial universe, of which we know nothing at all, there may be infinitudes of intervals. But if we admit, as Renan thinks we must, that our phenomenal world is but a finite part of an infinite whole, everything is possible, even God. F. Dét., 416. The day may come, for aught we know or can do to the contrary, when some outside influence will break through the causal nexus of our world and destroy its autonomy, without more regard for our theories than we show for the microbes in a clod that we crush. F. Dét., 416. Imagine an atom, unconscious as a whole but inhabited by conscious individuals asserting the complete autonomy of their little world. Suppose that chemistry should some day succeed in disintegrating these atoms. And is it quite impossible that

our universe should have similar proof some day of the possibility of interventions from outside powers? F. D  t., 414.

But plainly, all this speculation about the constitution of a supposed primordial universe turns on mere possibilities, and between *posse* and *esse* the gulf is too wide to be bridged by the fragile fabrics of mere fancy. So far as our positive knowledge of nature extends, Renan maintains, inviolate natural law, unbroken by any trace of supernatural intervention, reigns supreme in the universe. Cf. A. S., 170-1; 174.

This intense constitutional aversion, as it must be called, for anything that savored of miracle, is best understood from a study of his childhood environment.

As Mr. Balfour among others has pointed out, one of the most important causes of belief, because the most irresistible, is the psychological climate, as he calls it, in which a person is born. And indeed, a little reflection will show that none of our earliest beliefs, whether in religion, philosophy or science, can be properly called the product of our own reasoning at all. A man cannot choose the first beginnings of his intellectual life any more than he can choose his parents or his native land. His first beliefs are matters of ethnical geography, and are determined by what may be called the moral zone or psychological climate of his early surroundings. In the words of Mr. Balfour:

“Considered from the side of their origin, a man’s early beliefs are mere products of natural conditions, psychological growths, comparable to the flora and fauna of continents and oceans.” Found. Bel., 196; Cf. James, Will to Bel.; Bain’s Ment. and Mor. Sci., especially the Appendix, p. 80; also Philos. Rev., V, p. Iff.

This truth is well exemplified in the life of Ernest Renan. His native town, Tr  guier, had grown out of an ancient monastery, and was shrouded in an atmosphere of mythology, as dense as Benares or Jagatnata. Souv., I. He calls it a nest of priests and nuns, cut off from all trade and industry. Secular pursuits were looked upon as vanity and vexation of spirit, while all about the town, in the high places and the country holy-

wells, Mab and Merlin, the fairies and the witches, had their devotees. Cf. Mme. Darmsteter, *Life of Renan*, pp. 4-5; Séailles, *E. R.*, p. 4.

A large place in the lives of the people was given to the worship of saints, most of them unknown to the rest of Christendom, and whose solitary little chapels stood here and there among the moors or barren rocks.

These local deities have left indelible marks on the mind of Renan. More than half a century later he writes:

"La physionomie étrange, terrible, de ces saints, plus druides que chrétiens, sauvages, vindicatifs, me poursuivait comme un cauchemar." *Souv.*, 82.

Among other virtues, these saints were reputed to possess the power of working miracles. A good example of these is the miracle by which, as Renan was taught to believe, his father was cured of fever when a child. Before day-break, the child was taken to the chapel of the saint who exercised the healing power. A blacksmith arrived at the same time with his forge, nails and tongs. He lighted his fire, made his tongs red-hot, and held them before the face of the saint, threatening to shoe him like a horse unless he cured the child of his fever. The threat took immediate effect, and the child was cured. *Souv.*, p. 86.

A still better test of credulity was the miracle performed once a year by *Saint Yves de la Vérité*, the patron-saint of Brittany, on the occasion of an annual festival held in his honor:

"La veille de la fête, le peuple se réunissait le soir dans l'église et, à minuit, le saint étendait le bras pour bénir l'assistance prosternée. Mais s'il y avait dans la foule un seul incrédule qui levât les yeux pour voir si le miracle était réel, le saint, justement blessé de ce soupçon, ne bougeait pas, et, par la faute du mécréant, personne n'était béni." *Souv.*, 11.

Renan was not slow to discover a common trait in all these miracles: the credulity of the witnesses. "Das Wunder ist des Glaubens liebstes Kind."

With this environment of his childhood and the circumstances of his early life in view, we are no longer surprised to find that his interest as a theological student in Paris should have centered in the subject of miracles, and that throughout his long life the question of naturalism vs. supernaturalism should have been in the fore-ground of all his philosophical speculations. It is impossible to read his later discussions of miracles without being reminded of the wonder-working saints of his early surroundings.

"Il y a des miracles quand on y croit; ils disparaissent quand on n'y croit plus." Mor. Cr., 194. Cf. V. J., L-LII, 268; Dial., 14-22; Q. C., 221.

"Aucun miracle ne s'est produit dans des conditions vraiment scientifiques, en présence de juges compétents." Or. Lang., 241; Apost., 37-42; Fragm., 318-19.

Renan insists that his rejection of miracles is not a violation of scientific method, nor an *a priori* procedure. Rather is it the inevitable result of an impartial study of nature and history. There is no evidence at the present day of any violation or suspension of natural law, he maintains; and as for the miracles alleged to have occurred in the distant past, they are in the same class with sirens and centaurs. What reason have we for disbelieving either the one or the other except that they have never been seen? Dial., 246. Hence the burden of proof, he insists, lies not with those who reject miracles, but with those who affirm them. Science is not called upon to disprove groundless assertions gratuitously made. *Quod gratis asseritur gratis negatur.* F. Dét., 405.

"Chercher à expliquer les récits surnaturels ou les réduire à des légendes, ce n'est pas mutiler les faits au nom de la théorie; c'est partir de l'observation même des faits. . . Une observation qui n'a pas été une seule fois démentie nous apprend qu'il n'arrive de miracles que dans les temps et les pays où l'on y croit, devant des personnes disposées à y croire. . . Ce n'est donc pas au nom de telle ou telle philosophie, c'est au nom d'une constante expérience, que nous banissons le miracle

de l'histoire." V. J., L-II; Apost., 37ff; Dial, 318-19.

"C'est par les sciences historiques qu'on peut établir (et, selon moi, d'une manière péremptoire) . . . qu'il n'y a jamais eu de fait surnaturel. Ce n'est point par un raisonnement *à priori* que nous repoussons le miracle; c'est par un raisonnement critique ou historique." Souv., 328. Cf. *ibid.*, 282.

It is a noteworthy fact that Renan seldom approaches the question of miracles without citing either Malebranche or Littré. The influence of the former on Renan was probably greater in this matter than that of any other writer.

The conception of miracle, according to Renan, is a legacy from an unscientific age, and entirely without rational meaning today. At a time when everybody believed, as a matter of course, in spirits and their intervention in human affairs, anything that baffled the understanding was considered sufficiently explained by calling it a miracle, that is to say the work of supernatural powers. A. S., 262. But to a modern mind such an explanation is without meaning. To call an event miraculous to-day is not to explain it, but rather to class it as unexplained.

"La condition même de la science est de croire que tout est explicable naturellement, même l'inexplicable. Pour la science, une explication surnaturelle n'est ni vraie ni fausse; ce n'est pas une explication." Q. C., 223.

In Renan's sense of the word miracle, indeed, it would be a contradiction in terms to speak of miracles in the remote past. The miraculous, as he conceives it, is not merely the inexplicable; it is a formal derogation from recognized laws in the name of a particular desire. A thing is not miraculous merely because it is unique, or not understood. Apost., 37-42; Or. Lang., 239.

As thus defined, a miracle is a comparatively modern conception, a kind of by-product of natural science. Obviously, there must be a conception of natural law before we can think of an infraction or suspension of natural law; or rather the two

conceptions, law and miracle, undifferentiated in primitive minds, develop together, *pari passu*, as the idea of natural law becomes definite.² Miracle implies law, as supernaturalism implies naturalism. They are correlative terms, and only have a meaning with reference to each other.

The opposition of law and miracle, of naturalism and supernaturalism, thus represent different stages in the evolution of man's ideas about nature. Time was when the word miracle explained things, in the sense of satisfying curiosity, just as phlogiston, chemism, heredity, electricity, microbe, even evolution itself, have served in turn to explain almost anything to unscientific minds of a later day. In the mythological ages of primitive man, spirits were as real as bacteria are to-day, and their action as universal. The exact nature of their activity, its limits and conditions, nobody stopped to examine in detail. Cf. A. S., 45-6; also V. J., 41.

But in his polemics against the miraculous Renan seems not to have realized sufficiently, at least in his earlier days, the necessity of compromise in passing from the one régime to the other.

"Tout ou rien," he exclaims, "supernaturalisme absolu ou rationalisme sans réserve." A. S., 49.

But who could expect that the human race should pass from mythology to logic at a single bound? Should we not call it the greatest miracle of all if humanity had leaped suddenly from undoubting belief to unbelieving doubt?

Nor has Renan, in his crusade against supernaturalism, always kept to the straight and narrow path of sound logic. When, for example, miracles are declared impossible because natural law is absolute and universal (A. S., 48, 169), he is plainly assuming the very point at issue. Such a statement amounts to saying that miracles cannot happen because they do not; a position which he has himself refuted elsewhere:

"Dans le milieu que nous expérimentons, il ne se passe pas de miracles; mais, au point de vue de l'infini, rien n'est impossible." F. Dét., 418.

Occasionally also, in reply to a certain class of theologians,

and presumably on the biblical principle of answering the fool according to his folly, he has repeated the well-worn argument that miracles are inconsistent with the idea of an all-knowing and all-powerful creator, as subsequent interventions would imply that the original plan of the world was defective and needed occasional correction. Or. Lang., 239.

But in such quibbling he rarely indulges. Already in *L'Avenir de la science* he takes the ground that belief in supernaturalism, like belief in fetichism, will never be dispelled by metaphysical argumentation.

"Le seul moyen de guérir de cette étrange maladie qui, à la honte de la civilisation, n'a pas encore disparue de l'humanité, c'est la culture moderne. Mettez l'esprit au niveau de la science, nourrissez-le dans la méthode rationnelle, et, sans lutte, sans argumentation, tomberont ces superstitions surannées. . . . La science positive et expérimentale, en donnant à l'homme le sentiment de la vie réelle, peut seule détruire le supernaturalisme." A. S., 48-9.

It is interesting to note that Renan, while repudiating miracles in the past and the present, admits their possibility in the future. Supernatural interventions do not occur at the present time, because there is no supernatural being capable of intervening. Some day, however, such a being may exist. In the remote future, when evolution has run its course and the universe attained to complete self-consciousness, personal acts of divine will may take the place of natural law, even to the extent of becoming the normal *modus operandi* of nature.

"Mais le miracle, c'est-à-dire l'intervention d'un être supérieur, qui maintenant n'a pas lieu, pourra un jour, quand Dieu sera conscient, être le régime normal de l'univers." F. Dét., 441. Also in his article on Amiel, F. Dét., 392-3.

Is Renan, then, to be classed as a materialist, in view of his disbelief in the existence of a conscious ruler of the universe? That would be a great mistake. Cf. Dial., 143-4, 253, 141. The truth is that materialism in every form, whether rational or temperamental, was repulsive to him. As for ontological materialism, the doctrine that matter is the one eternal

self-existent reality, the ultimate *Weltstoff*, so to speak, he explicitly rejects it as a palpable absurdity. A. S., 478. Matter, he declares, has no real independent existence. It is merely the form in which the true substance of the universe, whatever that may be, becomes manifest to our senses; a bridge of communication, as it were, between spirit and spirit in the finite world.

"Je ne puis trop le répéter," he writes in 1862, "c'est l'idéal qui est, et la réalité passagère qui paraît être." Frag., 250.

"S'il est une induction qui résulte naturellement de l'aspect général des faits, c'est que la conscience de l'individu naît et se forme, qu'elle est une résultante, mais une résultante plus réelle que la cause qui la produit et sans commune mesure avec elle. . . . Le matérialisme est donc un non-sens plutôt qu'une erreur. Il est le fait d'esprits étroits qui se noient dans leurs propres mots et s'arrêtent au petit côté des choses." Mor. Cr., 65.

"L'âme est la première des réalités et la seule pleine réalité. C'est l'âme qui est, et le corps qui paraît être." Ibid., 63. Cf. Dial., 56, 141; A. S., 261; Or. Lang., 99; V. J., 29; Dr. Ph., 22-3.

Is spirit, then, the ultimate reality, the true substance of the world? There are numerous passages in Renan's books which would make it appear that he thought so, as for example, the statement last quoted. That is not his meaning, however. In reality he takes a middle ground, declaring the one assertion as unwarranted as the other. Neither matter nor mind are absolute, independent, self-existent realities. Rather, our ideas of matter and spirit are both of them negative conceptions. "What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind." All that we know about either is that it is not the other; matter is not-mind, mind is not-matter. "Tout ce qui n'est point prose est vers, et tout ce qui n'est point vers est prose." Renan's only advance upon this tautology consists in the statement, little more than a guess, that matter and spirit are distinct and irreducible modes of existence in which the real reality, whatever that may be, becomes manifest to our senses.

This view, already distinctly expressed in the *Avenir de la science*, he maintained to the end.

"Les mots de corps et d'âme restent parfaitement distincts, en tant que représentant des ordres de phénomènes irréductibles; mais faire cette diversité toute phénoménale synonyme d'une distinction ontologique, c'est tomber dans un pesant réalisme, et imiter les anciennes hypothèses des sciences physiques, qui supposaient autant de causes que de faits. . . . Le vrai est qu'il y a une substance unique, qui n'est ni corps ni esprit, mais qui se manifeste par deux ordres de phénomènes, qui sont le corps et l'esprit, que ces deux mots n'ont de sens que par leur opposition, et que cette opposition n'est que dans les faits." A. S., 478.

In his reply to the *Discours de réception* of M. Pasteur before the Académie Française, 1882, he says:

"Le but du monde, c'est l'idée; mais je ne connais pas un cas où l'idée se soit produite sans matière; je ne connais pas d'esprit pur ni d'oeuvre d'esprit pur. . . . Je ne sais pas si je suis spiritualiste ou matérialiste." Disc., 78. Cf. Dial., 55-6; Frag., 253.

It is only very occasionally, however, that Renan adverts to questions of this order. He was not much addicted to speculations about the essence of Being. Metaphysical speculations seemed to him, in his normal moods, an unprofitable waste of time, an intellectual legerdemain unworthy of a serious mind, and completely barren of results so far as the advancement of positive knowledge is concerned.³

"Si la philosophie ne veut pas rester une toile de Pénélope, sans cesse et toujours vainement recommencée, il faut qu'elle devienne savante." Mor. Crit., 81.

"La tentative de construire la théorie des choses par le jeu des formules vides de l'esprit est une prétention aussi vaine que celle du tisserand que voudrait produire de la toile en faisant aller sa navette sans y mettre du fil." Mor. Crit., 82. Cf. Souv., 250; Avert. IV, 323; Lang. Eém., 505; Djsc., 39.

But although the ultimate nature of reality is thus unknown, and presumably unknowable, Renan is very positive in his

numerous assertions regarding its aims. An essential feature of his nature-philosophy is its teleology. The universe is certainly not an assemblage of undirected, blindly acting forces, it is a mechanism moving towards a predetermined goal.

"L'univers a un but idéal et sert à une fin divine; il n'est pas seulement une vaine agitation, dont la balance finale est zéro." Dial., XIV.

This is inferred from the fact of evolution throughout nature, the universal tendency in virtue of which the possible develops into the actual, the actual into the conscious, and the conscious into progressively higher forms of self-consciousness. As the germ of an animal or plant tends to evolve conformably to its ancestral pattern, so does the evolution of the world as a whole follow a predetermined course. Dial., 23-4; Frag., 177.

This belief in the purposive character of world evolution is not by any means the expression merely of a passing mood, or the casual flight of an erratic fancy. It is repeated again and again, in a great variety of forms—essays, speeches, dialogues, histories, plays,—and in widely different associations. It is, in fact, one of the few constant items in his eminently inconstant creed. Renan thoroughly believed, in his more serious moments at least, in some "far-off divine event, toward which the whole creation moves." As if to make sure of being taken in earnest, he declares his belief in teleology to be one of the only two propositions in philosophy of which he is certain beyond a doubt, the other being his belief in the absoluteness and universality of natural law.

"Autant je tiens pour indubitable qu'aucun caprice, aucune volonté particulière n'intervient dans le tissu des faits de l'univers, autant je regarde comme évident que le monde a un but et travaille à une oeuvre mystérieuse. Il y a quelque chose qui se développe par une nécessité intérieure, par un instinct inconscient, analogue au mouvement des plantes vers l'eau ou la lumière. . . . Le monde est en travail de quelque chose; *omnis creatura ingemiscit et parturit.*" Dial., 22. Cf. Frag., 177, 179.

If we ask what can be this ulterior goal of world-development, his answer is ready: It is the production of Reason.

"Le but du monde est de produire de la raison. Tout lui est bon pour cela. Chaque planète fabrique de la pensée, du sentiment esthétique et moral; la petite récolte de vertu et de raison que produit chaque monde est la fin de ce monde, comme la sécrétion de la gomme est le dernier but du gommier." Dial., 58-9.

Again in his letter to M. Berthelot, Frag., 177:

"Deux éléments, le temps et la tendance au progrès, expliquent l'univers. *Mens agitat molem. . . Spiritus intus alit. . .* Il y a une conscience obscure de l'univers qui tend à se faire, un secret ressort qui pousse le possible à exister." Frag., 177-8. Cf. Dial., 144; Dr. Ph., 189.

It is needless to observe that the Reason which, according to Renan, the universe is destined to evolve, is not human reason, but intelligence or mind in its widest sense, including all conscious beings of whatever sort, past, present and to come. Human reason, it is true, marks the highest point yet reached, so far as the process is represented on this planet.

"Pour moi je pense qu'il n'est pas dans l'univers d'intelligence supérieure à celle de l'homme, en sorte que le plus vaste génie de notre planète est vraiment le prêtre du monde, puisqu'il en est la plus haute réflexion." Frag., 283. Cf. Dial., 20-1; A. S., note 14.

Au moyen âge, le plus haut résultat du monde, au moins de la planète Terre, était un choeur de religieux chantant des psaumes. La science de notre temps, répondant au désir qu'a le monde de se connaître, atteint des effets bien supérieurs." Frag., 430-1.

But, of course, evolution does not stop with man. Humanity is merely a transitional link, human reason only a phase in the evolutionary movement whose ultimate goal is the production of a universal reason or world-consciousness. A. S., XX; Dial., 118-23; Frag., 182-3; A. S., note 14. In a single word, evolution is a deific process. The development of con-

sciousness is the development of God, that is to say of a being who will one day permeate and govern the universe as the soul its body. F. Dét., 430. Cf. A. S., 37; and especially, note 42; also Dial., 143; Souv., XXI-II. God is immanent in nature, and in all its products; the laws of nature are the habits of God. Dial., 25-6; 125; Frag., 248.

“De qui est donc cette phrase. . . “Dieu est immanent dans l'ensemble de l'univers, et dans chacun des êtres qui le composent. Seulement il ne se connaît pas également dans tous. Il se connaît plus dans la plante que dans le rocher, dans l'animal que dans la plante, dans l'homme que dans l'animal, dans l'homme intelligent que dans l'homme borné, dans l'homme de génie que dans l'homme intelligent, dans Socrate que dans l'homme de génie, dans Bouddha que dans Socrate, dans le Christ que dans Bouddha.” Voilà la thèse fondamentale de toute notre théologie. Si c'est bien là ce qu'a voulu dire Hégel, soyons hégéliens.” Dial, 187; 310; Dr. Ph. 22-3; A. S., 188-9; 200-1; Or. Lang., 99.

Renan insists that his teleology is not open to the objections properly raised against the Aristotelian finalism of the scholastics. His own conception, he claims, does not imply the existence of a conscious, deliberating, omnipotent power. The realization of nature's aim is not a conscious execution of a pre-conceived plan. Evolution attains its purpose without special aim, by a succession of lucky hits, so to speak.

“Les objections des savants qui se mettent en garde contre ce qu'il tiennent pour une résurrection du finalisme portent à fond contre le système d'un créateur réfléchi et tout-puissant. Elles ne portent en rien contre notre hypothèse d'un *nisus* profond, s'exerçant d'une manière aveugle dans les abîmes de l'être, poussant tout à l'existence à chaque point de l'espace. Ce *nisus* n'est ni conscient, ni tout-puissant; il tire le meilleur parti possible de la matière dont il dispose.” F. Dét., 429-30. Cf. A. S., 258; Souv., 373.

The evolutionary impulse is an unconscious tendency or drift, *ein blinder Drang*, groping its way in the dark, and reaching its goal in the end, in spite of endless blundering and countless

failures, because of its eternal persistence and indefatigable endeavor. Imagine, says Renan, an insect fluttering about in a room from which the only escape is through a hole in the ceiling just large enough for the creature to pass through if it happens to strike the exact centre of the opening. Allow this insect infinite time and infinite patience and perseverance, and it will ultimately succeed. Such is the universe; always young, always enterprising, never discouraged, and with a supply of material for experimentation so inexhaustible that waste is no loss.⁴

But how can these positive statements, so often repeated in Renan's books, be made to accord with his explicit rejection of metaphysics?

"Il n'y a pas de vérité," he has told us, "qui n'ait son point de départ dans l'expérience scientifique, qui ne sorte directement ou indirectement d'un laboratoire ou d'une bibliothèque, etc." Frag., 283-4; *ibid.*, 263, 265.

"Comment," asks M. Séailles, "l'expérience scientifique l'autorise-t-elle à conclure que Dieu se fait, qu'un jour il sera?" E. R., 212.

Renan's own reply is that it does not. In spite of his frequent reiterations of the deific doctrine, he has really forestalled criticism by explicit declarations on the other side of the question. How, for example, can the following words be reconciled with his doctrine of deific evolution, when taken together with his rejection of metaphysics?

"La théodicée n'a aucun fondement expérimental. . . . Demander la Divinité à l'expérience, c'est donc s'abuser." Frag., 318-20.

And again in his preface to the *Drames Philosophiques*, written in 1888:

"La philosophie, au point de raffinement où elle est arrivée, s'accommode à merveille d'un mode d'exposition où rien ne s'affirme, où tout s'induit, se fond, s'oppose, se nuance. On n'en est plus à perfectionner les règles du syllogisme, ni à fortifier les preuves de l'existence de Dieu ou de l'immortalité de l'âme. L'homme voit bien, à l'heure qu'il est, qu'il ne saura

jamais rien de la cause suprême de l'univers ni de sa propre destinée." Dr. Ph., III.

Two years later, in another preface,—all his prefaces are written with special care—we have the two opposite views expressed in almost the same breath:

"Rien ne nous indique quelle est la volonté de la nature, ni le but de l'univers. Pour nous autres, idéalistes, une seule doctrine est vraie, la doctrine transcendante selon laquelle le but de l'humanité est la constitution d'une conscience supérieure, ou, comme on disait autrefois, la plus grande gloire de Dieu." A. S., XVI.

Here we learn that our author distinguished between scientific truth and transcendental truth, the one for all men and the other reserved for idealists; but how, again, is this "doctrine transcendante" to be reconciled with his rejection of metaphysics? Is not his theory one thing, and his practice quite another?

With regard to his theory, one is curious to know what stage this God-evolving process may have reached in our own day. May we say that God *is*, as well as that he *will be*? In a letter dated August, 1862, written in answer to this very question, Renan says:

"En dehors de la nature et de l'homme, y a-t-il donc quelque chose? me demandez-vous.

"Il y a tout, répondrai-je. La nature n'est qu'une apparence, l'homme n'est qu'un phénomène. Il y a le fond éternel, il y a l'infini, la substance, l'absolu, l'idéal; il y a, selon la belle expression musulmane, *celui qui dure*; il y a, selon l'expression juive, plus belle encore, *celui qui est*. Voilà le père du sein duquel tout sort, au sein duquel tout rentre." Dial., 252.

This is not merely ironical jargon employed to put off impertinent questions. The statement is repeated in many different connections. In the lecture *Rome et le Christianisme*, for example, we read:

"La vie nous paraît un court passage entre deux longues nuits. . . . Une seule chose est certaine, c'est le sourire paternel, qui, à certaines heures, traverse la nature, attestant

qu' un oeil nous regarde et qu' un coeur nous suit." C. d'Angl., 200-1. Cf. Souv., 376.

And again in his article: *la Métaphysique et son avenir*:

"Dans la nature et l'histoire je vois bien mieux le divin que dans des formules abstraites d'une théodicée artificielle et d'une ontologie sans rapports avec les faits. . . . L'infini n'existe que quand il revête une forme finie. Dieu ne se voit que dans ses incarnations." Frag., 310; *ibid.*, 250.

These are explicit statements. Unfortunately, however, for logical consistency, he is equally explicit on the other side of the question. Contrast, for example, the passage last quoted with the following, taken from the same article:

"La théodicée n'a aucun fondement expérimental. Loin de révéler Dieu, la nature est immorale; le bien et le mal lui sont indifférents. . . . L'histoire de même est un scandale permanent au point de vue de la morale." Frag., 319. Cf. *Disc.*, pp. 75, 134.

And again:

"La conscience est peut-être une forme secondaire de l'existence. Un tel mot n'a plus de sens quand on veut l'appliquer au tout, à l'univers, à Dieu. Conscience suppose une limitation, une opposition du moi et du non-moi, qui est la négation même de l'infini. Ce qui est éternel, c'est l'idée." *Dial.*, 140-1.

In his article on Amiel he speaks of the "conscience générale obscure" as being "tout à fait insoucieuse des individus" (*F. Dét.*, 391); and repeatedly he declares that the process of deific evolution is still very far from its goal, which perhaps it may never attain. Compared with the omnipotence and omniscience which the world-soul is probably destined some day to attain, its present condition is comparable to the semi-consciousness of an oyster.

"La conscience du tout paraît jusqu'ici bien obscure. Elle ne semble pas dépasser beaucoup celle de l'huître et du polypier, mais elle existe; le monde va vers ses fins avec un instinct sûr." *Dial.*, 23-4; cf. *F. Dét.*, 442-3.

It would be interesting to know how Renan would have us reconcile the "*sourire paternel* . . . attestant qu'un oeil

nous regarde et qu'un coeur nous suit" with this oyster-consciousness of the over-soul in its present stage.

A third statement of his, it is true, supplies a connecting link; but this statement appears under the heading *Rêves*:

"Croyez-moi, Dieu est une nécessité absolue. Dieu sera, et Dieu est. En tant que réalité, il sera; en tant qu'idéal, il est. *Deus est simul in esse et in fieri*. Cela seul peut se développer qui est déjà. Comment d'ailleurs imaginer un développement ayant pour point de départ le néant." Dial., 145-6. Cf. F. Dét., XV—XVII.

Without entering here on a discussion of the grounds upon which even the ideal existence of God is affirmed in this intermediate statement, it is clear that it does not remove the contradiction between the other two. Even here the existence of God as an actual and completed present reality is distinctly denied.⁵

A very provoking mannerism of Renan, whenever he touches these questions, is the substitution of vague, grandiloquent phrases for coherent ideas. What, precisely, does he mean by "*le fond éternel, l'infini, la substance, l'idéal, l'abîme de l'être*," and so forth?

"Renan abuse de la mythologie," suggests M. Séailles, "il fait des êtres avec des mots." E. R., 282, note 2: Cf. *ibid.*, 192-3.

Much of Renan's religious philosophy is in fact mere rhetoric. His language reminds one of Napoleon's famous harangue to his soldiers in Egypt: "Soldats, du haut de ces monuments quarante siècles vous contemplent!" The emptiest rhetoric will serve when minds are made up in advance. It is so in philosophy and religion. Glittering sophistries, from the lips of a good or great man, real or supposed, are often more powerful than truth itself as inducements to noble and heroic living.

Stripped of its rhetoric, Renan's belief in a God amounts to little more than a consciousness that our phenomenal world is probably not the whole of existence. Some deeper reality, beginning and end of all things, most probably exists; but con-

cerning its ultimate nature and attributes nothing whatever is known.

"La tentative d'expliquer l'ineffable par des mots est aussi désespérée que celle de l'expliquer par des récits ou des images: la langue, condamnée à cette torture, proteste, hurle, détonne. . . . Toute proposition appliquée à Dieu est impertinente, une seule exceptée: Il est." Frag., 323-5.

Renan expressly repudiates the assumption that any conclusions can be drawn, as to the attributes of God, from the bare assertion of his existence, or even from the proposition that he is a spirit. Remembering that the word spirit bears a purely negative meaning in his ontology, we are prepared for the following *reductio ad absurdum* of scholastic argumentation:

"On dit, par exemple, Dieu est un esprit, il a tous les attributs des esprits. Esprit signifiant seulement tout ce qui n'est pas corps, ce raisonnement équivaut à celui-ci: Il y a deux classes d'animaux, les chevaux et les non-chevaux. L'oiseau est un non-cheval. Le poisson est aussi un non-cheval. Donc l'oiseau et le poisson sont de la même espèce, et ce qui se dit de l'oiseau peut se dire du poisson." A. S., note 192.

On questions concerning the nature and attributes of what is known as the Absolute, Renan was an agnostic.

"Des voiles impénétrables," he writes in 1859, "nous débrobent le secret de ce monde étrange dont la réalité à la fois s'impose à nous et nous accable; la philosophie et la science poursuivront à jamais, sans jamais l'atteindre, la formule de ce Protée qu'aucune raison ne limite, qu'aucun langage n'exprime." Mor. Cr., I—II; Disc., 216; also Preface to the Dial.; Hist. rel., 418.

Again, in his reply to the *Discours de réception* of M. Pasteur, 1882:

"Le résultat final, c'est encore que le plus grand des sages a été l'Ecclésiaste, quand il représente le monde livré aux disputes des hommes, pour qu'ils n'y comprennent rien depuis un bout jusqu'à l'autre." Disc., 81.

Already in his first book he takes up the position that the human mind, developed by contact with the phenomenal world

and therefore adapted to it alone, is unable to apprehend "things-in-themselves." As the human ear is adapted to the perception of sound only within a certain middle region of wave-lengths, and is deaf to everything above or below its range, so with reason: both the infinitely small and the infinitely great are beyond its reach. Man is unable to conceive either an absolute beginning or an absolute end; a first cause is as unthinkable as a last effect. Carry ontological speculation beyond a certain limit, and you are brought to the merest tautology. Every act of mind, he declares, like every equation, is reducible at last to $A = A$. See A. S., p. 477.

"Il faut renoncer à l'étroit concept de la scolastique, prenant l'esprit humain comme une machine parfaitement exacte et adéquate à l'absolu. Des vues, des aperçus, des jours, des ouvertures, des sensations, des couleurs, des physionomies, des aspects, voilà les formes sous lesquelles l'esprit perçoit les choses. La géométrie seule se forme en axiomes et en théorèmes. Ailleurs le vague est le vrai." A. S., 58. Cf. *ibid.*, 56; 152-153; 477; and note 26. Also *Dial.*, VI, 147.

"Nous ne savons pas! voilà tout ce qu'on peut dire de clair sur ce qui est au-delà du fini. Ne nions rien, n'affirmons rien, espérons. Gardons une place, dans les funérailles, pour la musique et l'encens." F. Dét., XVII. Cf. C. d'Angl., 6-7.

The question whether the human mind, inadequate and unsatisfactory though it be as a measure of objective reality, is reliable within the limits of perception adapted to its own constitution, is raised by Renan at the beginning of his *Dialogues philosophiques*:

Philalèthe:

"Force nous est bien, cependant, d'essayer de construire d'après ce que nous voyons la théorie de ce que nous ne voyons pas, sous peine de rassembler à l'animal qui, courbé vers la terre, ne s'occupe que de l'objet le plus prochain de ses sens et de ses appétits.

Euthyphron:

"Soit, ... Mais un doute supérieur plane sur toutes ces spéculations. Le doute tient à une question insoluble. Notre constitution psychologique, qui est l'oeil par lequel nous voyons la réalité, n'est-elle pas elle-même trompeuse? Ne sommes-nous pas les jouets d'une erreur inévitable? Impossible de répondre à une pareille interrogation sans tomber dans un cercle vicieux.

Philalèthe:

"Je me suis habitué à ne plus m'arrêter à ce doute, qui a jeté tant de philosophes dans une voie sans issue. Comme l'instrument de la raison, manié scientifiquement et appliqué à la façon d'un étalon inflexible de la réalité, n'a jamais conduit à une erreur, il faut en conclure qu'il est bon et qu'on peut s'y fier. Une balance se vérifie par elle-même, quand, en variant les pesées, elle donne des résultats constants." Dial., 6-7.

The further question, whether man's present "faculties" of perception are final, whether new ones may not in time be developed or unknown ones discovered, Renan seems nowhere to have considered explicitly, though an affirmative answer would seem to be implied in his belief that the evolving God is developing through humanity.

Concerning the future of religion, Renan is in complete agreement with Herbert Spencer. Positive knowledge, he maintains, can never fill out the whole region of possible thought. Beyond the circle of the known lies the region of the unknown. The very nature of intelligence and constitution of the mind imply that around this circle of knowledge must always extend a margin of ignorance. The greater one's knowledge, indeed, or the larger one's circle, the broader the outlook upon the surrounding area of the unknown, the region of ignorance and wonder, of mystery and miracle. Renan concludes from this that man will always be religious, for he will always be impelled, by the very nature of his mind, to reach over into this border-land of mystery, and seek to establish communion

with what he regards as a super-sensuous world. And what is this, Renan asks, if not religion?

"L'homme en face des choses est fatalement porté à en chercher le secret. Le problème se pose de lui-même, et en vertu de cette faculté qu'a l'homme d'aller au delà du phénomène qu'il perçoit . . . ; toujours, en face de l'inconnu, l'homme ressent un double sentiment, respect pour le mystère, noble témérité qui le porte à déchirer le voile pour connaître ce qui est au delà." A. S., 17-18.

And again before the *Académie Française*:

"Il est des sujets où l'on aime mieux déraisonner que de se taire. Vérité ou chimère, le rêve de l'infini nous attirera toujours. . . . En pareille matière, la puérilité même des efforts est touchante. Il ne faut pas demander de logique aux solutions que l'homme imagine pour se rendre quelque raison du sort étrange qui lui est échu." Disc., 40-1. Cf. Dial., VI, VII; XIII.

"La religion est nécessaire. Le jour où elle disparaîtrait, ce serait le cœur même de l'humanité qui se desséchait. La religion est aussi éternelle que la poésie, aussi éternelle que l'amour; elle survivra à la destruction de toutes les illusions.

. . . . Jamais l'homme ne se contentera d'une destinée finie." Q. C., 235; *ibid.*, 414; also C. d'Ang., 6-7; Ant., XLIX—LI.

This propensity of human nature to "other-worldliness" led Renan to the position of Kant. Cf. Mor. Crit., IV. Besides the pure reason which serves in the phenomenal world, there is in man, he believed, a mysterious transcendental faculty or capacity, in virtue of which he is enabled to hold communion with a super-sensuous world. This capacity he variously designates "Moral Sense," "Categorical Imperative," "Practical Reason," "Conscience," "Divine Instinct," and so forth; but called by whatever name, it is always opposed to the Pure Reason. It is the pure heart that sees God; pure reason is atheistic. Dr. Ph., 279-80.

"Il est une base indubitable que nul scepticisme n'ébranlera

et où l'homme trouvera jusqu'à la fin des jours le point fixe de ses incertitudes : le bien, c'est le bien ; le mal, c'est le mal. Pour haïr l'un et pour aimer l'autre, aucun système n'est nécessaire, et c'est en ce sens que la foi et l'amour, en apparence sans lien avec l'intelligence, sont le vrai fondement de la certitude morale et l'unique moyen qu'a l'homme de comprendre quelque chose au problème de son origine et de sa destinée." *Mor. Cr.*, II. Cf. *Job*, XC—XCI.

"Ce qui révèle le vrai Dieu, c'est le sentiment moral. Si l'humanité n'était qu'intelligente, elle serait athée; . . . Le devoir, le dévouement, le sacrifice, toutes choses dont l'histoire est pleine, sont inexplicables sans Dieu." *Frag.*, 321-3. Cf. *Dial.*, 30-1, 38.

Nor is the testimony of this moral sense less reliable than the deliverances of pure reason, or the verdict of sense-perception. Renan would admit that moral and religious intuitions cannot be expressed in rational speech, nor formulated in definite logical propositions; but he would insist, at the same time, that such an admission in no wise affects their veracity, and that ideas are not necessarily false because they are vague. Once admit that there is or can be such a thing as non-rational truth, and it seems impossible to avoid acknowledging symbolistic suggestion as legitimate language by the side of syllogistic assertion; the one for religion and the other for science.⁶

"La spiritualité de l'âme et l'existence de Dieu . . . sont des choses si claires qu'elles n'ont pas besoin d'être démontrées, ou, quand on les prend par l'analyse, des choses si obscures qu'elles ne sont pas démontrables." *Frag.*, 272. Cf. *ibid.*, 323.

To what extent, if at all, Renan was influenced by contemporary thinkers of the agnostic and positive schools, with whom he agrees in the main in much of his religious philosophy, it is impossible to make out with sufficient clearness to warrant positive statements. Cf. *Faguet*, *Hist. lit. fr.*, 410-11.

As for positivism, there is abundant evidence that he early became familiar with the doctrines of Comte and his disciple

Litré, though neither of these appears to have been sympathetically read by him.

Comte receives frequent mention in his earlier writings, but always in a disparaging tone. In *L'Avenir de la science*, for example, Renan's criticism is summed up in these words:

"En un mot, M. Comte n'entend rien aux sciences de l'humanité, parce qu'il n'est pas philologue." A. S., 151; also note 117.

And again in the *Souvenirs*:

"J'éprouvai une sorte d'agacement à voir la réputation exagérée d' Auguste Comte, érigé en grand homme de premier ordre pour avoir dit, en mauvais français, ce que tous les esprits scientifiques, depuis deux cents ans, ont vu aussi clairement que lui." Souv., 250.

But in spite of his unlaudatory estimates of the founder of positivism, there can be no question that Renan was deeply imbued with its spirit, and this appears to be due to the influence of Comte. Cf. Brunetière, *Manl. hist. lit. fr.*, 482. Mr. Babbitt briefly and correctly defines Renan as a scientist and positivist with a Catholic imagination. Souv., *Introd.*, IX.

Far more important than the influence of Comte, or of any of his own countrymen, except, perhaps, Malebranche, was the influence of the Germans, notably Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Herder, Goethe, and later Schopenhauer and v. Hartmann. With Kant, Herder and Hegel, however, Renan appears to have had only a secondhand acquaintance, apparently through Cousin and Quinet. His scientific work, too, in history and biblical criticism, was mainly built up on the results of German scholarship, as he often himself very gratefully acknowledged. Souv., 58, 246, 291, 311, 385; *Réf. Int.*, V—VI; Cf. *Hist. lit. fr.*, 456—7; Platzhoff, *E. R.*, 71; Séailles, *E. R.*, 244. For Renan's criticisms upon Hegel, see A. S., note 14; also p. 258; and Lang. *Sém.*, 505.

We have compared Renan with agnostics. But here again he very much lacked consistency. Many of his utterances, especially in the earlier period, are as far as possible removed

from the agnostic creed. Imagine Huxley or Spencer writing these words:

"Oui, il viendra un jour où l'humanité ne croira plus, mais où elle saura; un jour où elle saura le monde métaphysique et moral, comme elle sait déjà le monde physique." A. S., 91.

And yet an agnostic Renan certainly was, at least in the sense of distinguishing sharply between knowledge and opinion, fact and fable, and declaring the riddle of existence unsolvable by the human mind. Cf. Monod: Renan, etc., XIV.

"On ne fait pas de dialogues sur la géométrie; car la géométrie est vraie d'une façon impersonnelle. Mais tout ce qui implique une nuance de foi, d'adhésion voulue, de choix, d'antipathie, de sympathie, de haine et d'amour, se trouve bien d'une forme d'exposition où chaque opinion s'incarne en une personne et se comporte comme un être vivant." Dr. Ph., II. Cf. Dial., XIII—XIV; Disc., 75; Mor. Crit., I—II; A. S., 53-4.

"Refuser de déterminer Dieu n'est pas le nier; cette réserve est bien plutôt l'effet d'une profonde piété, qui tremble de blasphémer en disant ce qu'il n'est pas." Frag., 317.

There are two kinds of agnosticism, as everybody knows: that of flippant indifference, and that of baffled endeavor; and between the two there is a contrast in spirit and aim as great as that between tavern and temple. Renan belongs very emphatically in the latter class. There is no evidence, however, of any direct influence on Renan from contemporary agnosticism. As for the English school, there is nothing in his writings to suggest that he was even acquainted with their works. Neither Huxley, nor Spencer, nor Tyndall is once mentioned in any of his books.

This chapter must not close without at least a passing reference to Renan's latest phase, in which his philosophy of life fades out more and more into epicurean indifferentism. After a long life laboriously spent in the quest of what he conceived to be the truth, he falls more and more, like his model the Preacher, into a habit of discoursing discouragingly upon the vanity of all things.

“La vérité est sourde et froide; nos ardeurs ne la touchent pas. *Die neue Philosophie, die neuere Philosophie, die neueste Philosophie.* Mon Dieu! que ces surenchères sont naïves! Pourquoi se disputer ainsi la priorité de l’erreur? Sachons attendre; il n’y a peut-être rien au bout; ou bien, qui sait si la vérité n’est pas triste? Ne soyons pas si pressés de la connaître. . . . Mais, chers enfants, c’est inutile de se donner tant de mal à la tête, pour n’arriver qu’à changer d’erreur. Amusez-vous, puisque vous avez vingt ans; travaillez aussi.” F. Dét., X. Cf. Dr. Ph., 263.

“Je ne peux m’ôter de l’idée que c’est peut-être après tout le libertin qui a raison et qui pratique la vraie philosophie de la vie.” Souv., 149-50.

“Par la bouche de Renan jeune,” comments M. Séailles on this philosophy, “la jeunesse répond au vieux Renan: ‘Malheur à la génération qui a conçu la vie comme un repos et l’art comme une jouissance!’” E. R., 318. Cf. Q. C., 301.

The only redeeming feature in this indifference, if that is the word, is the intellectual hospitality it implies. A more tolerant man than Renan never was; and in the present instance his theory seems inspired by his practice. He repeatedly declares that the most cordial and most genuine toleration is that which rests on the broad and firm foundations of universal disillusionment:

“La plus solide bonté est celle qui se fonde sur le parfait ennui, sur la vue claire de ce fait que tout en ce monde est frivole et sans fond réel. Dans cette ruine absolue de toute chose, que reste-t-il? La méchanceté? Oh! Cela n’en vaut pas la peine. La méchanceté suppose une certaine foi au sérieux de la vie, la foi du moins au plaisir, la foi à la vengeance, la foi à l’ambition. Néron croyait à l’art; Commode croyait au cirque, et cela les rendait cruels. Mais le désabusé qui sait que tout objet de désir est frivole, pourquoi se donnerait-il la peine d’un sentiment désagréable—” Marc-Aur., 483.

“La bonté du sceptique est la plus solide de toutes; elle repose Cf. Disc., 75.

sur un sentiment profond de la vérité suprême: *Nil expedit.*" Eccl. 89; repeated P. Isr., V: 159-60.

If these statements are true, it seems safe to predict that "la bonté la plus solide du sceptique," this universal tolerance based on universal indifference, is not what humanity wants, or will permanently accept. Considerations of practical usefulness, rather than of speculative truthfulness, will doubtless continue to preside over the moral evolution of the race. The incorrigible prejudices of virtuous men will continue to count for more than the sceptic's "vérité suprême: *Nil expedit.*"

It must be admitted, however, that most people are least tolerant precisely in the sphere in which positive knowledge is most difficult, not to say impossible, the sphere of religion. Cf. James, Var. Rel. Exp., 338, 342-3; also P. Is., II, 102, 141. Renan was the very reverse. To the end of his life he was always willing to accord to his fellowmen the same freedom of belief, whether positive or negative, which he claimed for himself. His last word on this subject is contained in a little after-dinner speech:

"Nous autres libéraux, nous ne demandons qu'une seule chose, c'est que chacun ait la liberté de bâtir à sa manière son roman de l'infini. Tout ce qu'on balbutie en pareille matière revient à peu près au même et se résume à dire que, sur ce qui dépasse notre pauvre monde, on ne sait pas grand chose." F. Dét., 124-5.

CHAPTER III.

MAN.

In passing from Renan's philosophy of nature to his moral philosophy, we are not progressing to something more definite or more coherent. On the contrary, the vagueness which characterizes all his philosophical thought becomes increasingly prominent in his utterances concerning the moral life. It seems to have been one of his favorite convictions that a comprehensive description of the moral life, or statement of moral principles, cannot be given in a series of definite propositions logically consistent with each other.

"Telle est la véritable forme des vérités morales: c'est les fausser que leur appliquer ces moules inflexibles des sciences mathématiques, qui ne conviennent qu'à des vérités d'un autre ordre, acquises par d'autres procédés. . . . Quand donc cesserons-nous d'être de lourds scolastiques et d'exiger sur Dieu, sur l'âme, sur le morale, des petits bouts de phrases à la façon de la géométrie? Je suppose ces phrases aussi exactes que possible; elles seraient fausses, radicalement fausses, par leur absurde tentative de *définir*, de limiter l'infini: Ah! lisez-moi un dialogue de Platon, une méditation de Lamartine, une page de Herder, une scène de *Faust*. Voilà une philosophie, c'est-à-dire une façon de prendre la vie et les choses." A. S., 54-55. Cf. *ibid*, 152-3.

In *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, we find the same doctrine in a more elaborate and reasoned form, affirmed in opposition to the Averroists of Padua:

"La vérité en toute chose étant extrêmement délicate et fugitive, ce n'est pas à la dialectique qu'il est donné de l'atteindre. . . . Dans les sciences morales et politiques, . . . où les principes, par leur expression insuffisante et toujours

partielle, posent à moitié sur le vrai, à moitié sur le faux, les résultats du raisonnement ne sont légitimes qu'à condition d'être contrôlés à chaque pas par l'expérience et le bon sens. Le syllogisme excluant toute nuance et la vérité résidant tout entière dans les nuances, le syllogisme est un instrument inutile pour trouver le vrai dans les sciences morales. La pénétration, la souplesse, la culture multiple de l'esprit, voilà la vraie logique. La forme est, en philosophie, au moins aussi importante que le fond." Averr., 323; 170, X. Cf. Hist. Rel., 339-40.

"Autant vaudrait essayer d'atteindre un insecte ailé avec une massue que de prétendre, avec les serres pesantes du syllogisme, trouver le vrai en des matières aussi délicates. La logique ne saisit pas les nuances; or les vérités de l'ordre moral résident tout entières dans la nuance. Elles s'échappent par les mailles du filet de la scolastique." Mor. Crit., 189. Cf. *ibid*, 312-13. 13.

Perhaps the simplest and most direct way of exhibiting Renan's speculations in moral philosophy is to plunge at once *in medias res* and begin with its central feature, the problem of immortality. It is impossible, in fact, to discuss his view of morality without coming around again and again to this question. In his writings morality is practically identified with religion, and religion with immortality. With the most untiring emphasis he insists that the best foundation of morality after all, its only effective foundation indeed, is the belief in a future life.

"La poésie et la morale sont en effet deux choses différentes; mais elles supposent l'une et l'autre que l'homme n'est pas un être d'un jour sans lien avec l'infini qui le précède, sans responsabilité envers l'infini qui le suit." Mor. Crit., 112.

His point of view is very clearly described by M. Schérer, who makes it his own:

"Ayons le courage de le reconnaître: la morale ne peut se passer de transcendance, et par conséquent de métaphysique.

. . . Sachons voir les choses comme elles sont: la morale, la bonne, la vraie, l'ancienne, l'impérative, a besoin de l'ab-

solu; . . . elle ne trouve son point d'appui qu'en Dieu.

. . . La religion, c'est le surnaturel. Et j'ajoute: la morale de même; car la morale n'est rien si elle n'est pas religieuse." Schérer, *Litt. Cont.*, vol. 8, pp. 171, 182-3. Cf. also Prof. James: "Religion, in fact, for the great majority of our own race, *means* immortality, and nothing else." *Var. Rel. Exp.*, 524.

The problem of immortality early engaged Renan's attention, owing to his belief in universal evolution. He tells us that ever since he was capable of thinking for himself, it was to questions concerning the origin and destiny of man that his thoughts most frequently turned. *A. S.*, 160-1.

In 1848 he declares that the question relating to the origin of man must be solved, if at all, by the observational or historical method; and he indicates, in a manner that shows a clear grasp of the situation, the numerous preliminary questions to be answered before the solution of the general problem is possible. *A. S.*, 161-3. For some years previous he had been convinced that man is not a "special creation," but the cumulative product of evolutionary forces still at work. *A. S.*, 161. Cf. *ibid.*, note 75.

To what extent did the new theory of man's origin affect his conception of man's destiny? If humanity is the outcome of a long development reaching back to the first beginnings of life; if it is really true that man has grown, spiritually and intellectually as well as physically, from the brute animal, which in turn was evolved in the same gradual way from still lower forms, the question naturally arises: is it possible to continue affirming the immortality of man, without extending it also to the beasts of the field, and even to fishes and worms? At what point in the passage from protozoon to man does the immortal soul begin?

He clearly shows that the difficulty arises from the unbroken continuity of the evolutionary process. If evolution is indeed continuous, leading without a break from the lowest forms of life to the highest, it must be impossible to draw any definite

line of separation between mortal and immortal creatures. It would be quite arbitrary where such a line should be drawn.

A similar objection against the traditional creed arose from what may be called his psycho-physical conception of man. The very idea of body and soul as two distinct and separate entities, united in some mysterious way during life and by their separation marking what is called death, is an idea which he believed to be incompatible with evolutionary psychology. Where is the evidence that body and soul are separate existences at all? Might they not be different aspects merely of one and the same phenomenon? And if they are only different sides of one and the same thing, what sense can there be in the statement that the soul may continue to exist though the body have perished?⁷

These were some of the thorns which evolutionary science had sown in the once fruitful fields of theology, in which Renan was so earnestly at work. With these and kindred difficulties he grappled and struggled, for a time by day and by night. The result is well known. Unable to reconcile what he believed to be the teachings of science with those of the creed, he abandoned the priesthood and left the church. He was then a young man of two and twenty, and he lived to be almost seventy. Did his subsequent labors lead him to any deeper insight into this momentous question of human destiny?

In later years his position on the question of human immortality was, like most of his philosophical beliefs, a double one. A rationally conceived and scientifically established fact, he insists on the one hand, immortality most certainly is not. Indeed, he strongly inclines to the belief that, so far as scientific enquiry and demonstration can go, individual human immortality is very probably an illusion.

But while immortality cannot be asserted as a fact, neither can it, on the other hand, be convincingly shown to be a mere fiction. Absolute denial would be as misplaced as positive assertion. F. Dét., XV-XVII.

In Renan's philosophy the universe is divided into two

spheres, so to speak, the finite and the infinite, the relative and the absolute; and the criteria of truth which serve in the one are not, he believed, of necessity valid in the other. The idea of immortality therefore, though an entirely gratuitous assumption when addressed to the finite reason, may yet correspond to reality in the realm of the absolute.

"Les deux grands postulats de la vie humaine, Dieu et l'immortalité le l'âme, gratuits au point de vue du fini où nous vivons, sont peut-être vrais à la limite de l'infini." F. Dét., 419.

He often insists that belief in immortality is at bottom a corollary from faith in divine justice. A just God, he argues, cannot allow that the virtuous should wholly die. F. Dét., XV-XIX. If there is no hereafter, a virtuous life is an imposition without compensation, and not worth while. The idea that virtue must meet with its reward, he declares, is the most logical of all ideas in the human breast. P. Isr., IV, 277. Cf. Dial., 137.

"S'il était vrai que la vie humaine ne fût qu'une vaine succession de faits vulgaires, sans valeur suprasensible, dès la première réflexion sérieuse, il faudrait se donner la mort; il n'y aurait pas de milieu entre l'ivresse, une occupation tyrannique de tous les instants, et le suicide." A. S., 8; 411.

And again in his lecture before the Royal Institution, 1880:

"Dire que si ce monde n'a pas sa contrepartie, l'homme qui s'est sacrifié pour le bien ou le vrai doit le quitter content et absoudre les dieux, cela est trop naïf. Non, il a le droit de les blasphémer. . . Je veux que l'avenir soit une énigme; mais s'il n'y a pas d'avenir, ce monde est un affreux guet-apens." C. d'Angl., 242.

"S'il n'y a pas une autre vie pour réparer les iniquités de celle-ci, soutenir que Dieu est juste et ami du bien est le plus puéril des paradoxes ou la plus niaise des contre-vérités." Eccl., 33.

Again in his *Discours de réception* before the Académie Française:

"L'homme . . . invinciblement porté à croire à la justice et jeté dans un monde qui est et sera toujours l'injustice

même . . . , que voulez-vous qu'il fasse? Il se révolte contre le cercueil, il rend la chair à l'os décharné, la vie au cerveau plein de pourriture, la lumière à l'oeil éteint; il imagine des sophismes dont il rirait chez un enfant, pour ne pas avouer que la nature a pu pousser l'ironie jusqu'à lui imposer le fardeau du devoir sans compensation." Disc., 41.

Observe, however, that these statements admit of two very different conclusions: either there is no hereafter, or there is no just God. With the utmost emphasis he affirms that in this present world justice is not done.

"Loin de révéler Dieu, la nature est immorale; le bien et le mal lui sont indifférents. Jamais avalanche ne s'est arrêtée pour ne pas écraser un honnête homme; le soleil n'a pâli devant aucun crime; la terre boit le sang du juste comme le sang du pécheur. L'histoire de même est un scandale permanent au point de vue de la morale." Frag., 319. Cf. *ibid.*, 250; also Disc., 41; Eccl., 33; Souv. 119, 316.

The assertion that virtue is rewarded here below, he declares, is at once encountered by unanswerable objections. "The assertion is not true. In fact, in whatever age of the world, and in whatever society we place ourselves, compensatory justice is constantly violated. More versed in social science than the ancients, we can go further, and assert that it is not possible it should be otherwise. Injustice is to be found in Nature itself.

. . . A man dies in the devoted attempt to save another; no one can argue that absolute justice in this present world has been displayed in the fate of that man." P. Isr., IV: 278.

And again:

"In history, as a rule, man is punished for the good he does, and recompensed for the evil. . . . History is quite the contrary of virtue rewarded."⁸ P. Isr., I: 331. Cf. Réf., Int., XII: "The laws of history are the justice of God;" also Dr. Ph., 262.

But why multiply citations? Statements like these have become platitudes. And yet, if they are really true, it would seem indispensable, if the world is to be grounded in justice, that there should be opportunity for retribution and compen-

sation in another life. But where is Renan's proof for the existence of such a life? To prove that justice will reign in heaven, something more is required, surely, than the assertion of its notorious absence on earth! If there is no trace of divine justice in the past and the present, as Renan declares there is not, what ground can this be for affirming its existence in the future?

His answer is supplied by his theory of deific evolution. The destiny of man, he argues, is inseparably bound up with the destiny of God. Whether or not immortality shall some day be an established fact depends upon whether or not the universe succeeds in evolving a just God. At present paradise is a dream; billions of years hence it may be a reality. F. Dét., 419. Immortality as an essential and natural property of the human soul is a myth, to be sure; we shall most certainly die, soul and body, and nothing short of a miracle can bring us back into existence. This prodigious miracle may take place, however. The evolving Over-soul, having attained complete self-consciousness, will doubtless be just, and will recall to existence all who have labored in behalf of its own evolution. And then will immortality be established.

"Qui sait si le dernier terme du progrès, dans des millions de siècles, n'amènera pas la conscience absolue de l'univers, et dans cette conscience le réveil de tout ce qui a vécu?" V. J., 288.

"Quand Dieu sera en même temps parfait et tout-puissant, c'est-à-dire quand l'omnipotence scientifique sera concentrée entre les mains d'un être bon et droit, cet être voudra ressusciter le passé, pour en réparer les innombrables iniquités. Dieu existera de plus en plus; plus il existera, plus il sera juste." Dial., 135-6.

"L'oeuvre de l'humanité est le bien; ceux qui auront contribué au triomphe du bien *fulgebunt sicut stellae*." Dial., 138.

The clearest statement of this doctrine which he has anywhere given occurs in his article on Amiel:

"Nous éprouvons un invincible besoin de supposer dans le

gouvernement du monde la justice dont nous trouvons la dictée dans nos cœurs; et, comme il est de toute évidence que cette justice n'existe pas dans la réalité de l'univers, nous arrivons à exiger absolument, comme condition de la morale, la survivance de chaque conscience humaine au delà de la tombe. Ici éclate l'antinomie suprême de la nature et de la raison. Un tel postulat, en effet, est la chose la plus nécessaire *a priori* et la plus impossible *a posteriori*. . . . La résurrection serait un miracle. . . . Elle serait l'acte final du monde, le fait d'un Dieu tout-puissant et tout-sachant, capable d'être juste et voulant l'être. . . . Ce serait un don réservé par l'être, devenu absolu, parfait, omniscient, tout-puissant, à ceux qui auraient contribué à son développement." F. Dét., 390-2. Cf. *ibid.*, 418; P. Isr., IV: 286-7, 284; A. S., 220-1; Dial., 129-30; 142-3. Dr. Ph., 262-3. Souv., XXI-II.

Renan declares he can see no force in the objection that an immortality to be inaugurated ages hence is too remote a contingency to afford consolation in present suffering. Time is a purely subjective matter. Succession, which is a category of the finite mind, has no place in the realm of pure spirit. In the timeless eternity of the spirit-world, therefore, a sleep of a billion years is no longer than the sleep of a moment; and to shrink from the long interval of unconsciousness between death and the resurrection is like dreading the length of a night which is certain to be passed in sound and dreamless sleep. F. Dét., 419-20. To those who have died in a righteous cause, the reign of justice in heaven will seem like the immediate continuation and triumph of the very cause which they served on earth. P. Isr., IV, 287.

"Ceux qu'une tardive justice y replacera croiront être morts de la veille. Comme dans la légende du moyen âge, en palpant leur lit d'agonie, ils le trouveront encore chaud." F. Dét., 419.

The truth is, on this as on most other questions of the same order, Renan has taken both sides alternately. At one time we are told, if virtue and vice are the same after death, if saint and sinner alike both end in the same putrefaction of the tomb,

then God is not just. And then again we find him refuting his own argument.

“Je n’admets pas comme rigoureuse la preuve de l’immortalité tirée de la nécessité où serait la justice divine de réparer, dans une vie ultérieure, les injustices que l’ordre général de l’univers entraîne ici-bas. Cette preuve est conçue au point de vue de l’individu. Nos pères ont souffert, et nous héritons du fruit de leurs souffrances. Nous souffrons, l’avenir en profitera. Qui sait si un jour on ne dira pas: ‘En ce temps-là, on devait croire ainsi, car l’humanité fondait alors par ses souffrances l’état meilleur dont nous jouissons. Sans cela nos pères n’eussent point eu le courage de supporter la chaleur du jour. Mais maintenant nous avons la clef de l’énigme, et Dieu est justifié par le plus grand bien de l’espèce.’ Pendant que la croyance à l’immortalité aura été nécessaire pour rendre la vie supportable, on y aura cru.” A. S., note 162.

The only kind of immortality that he unconditionally affirms as rooted in the nature of things is what may be called the survival of influence. Man’s work will endure as long as the world. A. S., 226, 223. No action ever dies. The immortals are those who have contributed to an immortal work. F. Dét., 441. Cf. Dial., 131-2. In this sense the very worms have a place in the eternal chain of causation. A. S., 223; also note 42. Truth especially is imperishable; he that adds to the temple of truth even a single stone may justly boast: *Exegi monumentum aere perennius*. A. S., 226.

“L’immortalité consiste à travailler à une oeuvre immortelle, telles que sont l’art, la science, la religion, la vertu, la tradition du beau et du bien sous toutes leurs formes.” Mor. Crit., 140. Cf. *ibid.*, 63-4.

This doctrine likewise goes back to his earliest days. In the *Avenir de la science*, 1848-9, we read:

“Il faut donc admettre que tout ce qui aura été sacrifié pour le progrès se retrouvera au bout de l’infini, par une façon d’immortalité que la science découvrira un jour, et qui sera à l’immortalité fantastique du passé ce que le palais de Ver-

sailles est au château de cartes d'un enfant." A. S., 99. Cf. *ibid.*, note 42.

In a famous open letter to his friend M. Berthelot, his point of view is presented more fully and more clearly:

"Nous serons cendres depuis des milliards d'années, les quelques molécules qui font la matière de notre être seront désagrégées et passées à d'incalculables transformations; mais nous *ressusciterons* dans le monde que nous aurons contribué à faire. Notre oeuvre triomphera. . . . L'âme, la personne, doivent être conçues comme choses distinctes de la conscience. . . . L'âme est où elle agit, où elle aime. Dieu étant l'idéal, objet de tout amour, Dieu est donc essentiellement le lieu des âmes. La place de l'homme en Dieu, l'opinion que la justice absolue a de lui, le rang qu'il tient dans le seul vrai monde, qui est le monde selon Dieu, sa part en un mot de la conscience générale, voilà son être véritable. . . . C'est en Dieu que l'homme est immortel. Les catégories de temps et d'espace étant effacées dans l'absolu, ce qui existe pour l'absolu est aussi bien ce qui a été que ce qui sera. En Dieu vivent de la sorte toutes les âmes qui ont vécu. Pourquoi le règne de l'esprit, fin de l'univers, ne serait-il pas ainsi la résurrection de toutes les consciences?" Frag., 185-90. Cf. Dial., 139-43; Job, XCI; also Séailles, E. R., 208, note.

But what has this kind of immortality in common, one cannot help asking, except the name, with the continued existence of individual personality after death? "C'est en Dieu que l'homme est immortel. En Dieu vivent toutes les âmes qui ont vécu." Very good; but do not these words, from Renan's point of view, convey more sound than sense? For God, according to our author, is still in process of evolution, and he often declares it is by no means certain that our planet may not fail after all to contribute abiding results to that end. Hence to say that man is immortal because his work is incorporated as a link in the endless chain of cause and effect, seems only another way of saying, though a less disagreeable way,

that his personal destiny after death is that of the worm or the waterfall.⁹

In short, the belief in immortality represents, according to Renan, not a fact, but a hope; and fortunately for its own survival, is independent of logical proof. Man is not all reason, nor entirely governed by reason. On this truth he often insists. For ages men have believed in their own immortality without intellectual proof, and for ages to come they will continue so to believe, even in face of positive disproof.

"On ne fera jamais taire les objections du matérialisme. Il n'y a pas d'exemple qu'une pensée, un sentiment, se soient produits sans cerveau, ou avec un cerveau en décomposition. D'un autre côté, l'homme n'arrivera point à se persuader que sa destinée soit semblable à celle de l'animal. Même quand cela sera démontré, on ne le croira pas." Eccl., 87-8.

Immortality, in a word, is an inevitable postulate of human life. Whatever man's theories may be, in practice he cannot assume that his earthly life is the be-all and end-all of his personal existence.

"I own that I have grave doubts," he writes of himself, "as to individual immortality, and yet I almost constantly act as if I held in view things beyond my life." P. Isr., IV: 285. On this point he is very emphatic.

"L'histoire démontre cette vérité qu'il y a dans la nature humaine un instinct transcendant qui la pousse vers un but supérieur. Le développement de l'humanité n'est pas explicable dans l'hypothèse où l'homme ne serait qu'un être à destinée finie, la vertu qu'un raffinement d'égoïsme, la religion qu'une chimère." Peup. Sém., 42; Cf. F. Dét., 420.

"L'humanité est ainsi acculée à cette singulière impasse que, plus elle réfléchit, mieux elle voit la nécessité morale de Dieu et de l'immortalité, et mieux aussi elle voit les difficultés qui s'élèvent contre les dogmes dont elle affirme la nécessité." F. Dét., 434.

"Une voix est en nous, que seules les bonnes et grandes âmes savent entendre, et cette voix nous crie sans cesse: 'La vérité et le bien sont la fin de ta vie; sacrifie tout le reste à ce but;

et quand, suivant l'appel de cette sirène intérieure, qui dit avoir les promesses de vie, nous sommes arrivés au terme où devrait être la récompense, ah! la trompeuse consolatrice! elle nous manque." Disc., 91.

The note of scepticism in this last passage is one that is frequently sounded by Renan, especially in his later works (Dial., 26-29), though it is already suggested in passing even in the earliest. In the *Eau de jouvence*, Prospero, his favorite sage, suggests that this "*sirène intérieure*" is probably a device by which Nature dupes her children into furtherance of her own ulterior aims. That Prospero is in reality presenting the author's own views is clear from Renan's repetition of the same doctrine in the article on Amiel. And indeed, if the only evidence for a life to come is entirely non-rational, as Renan maintains, how can we ever be sure that our belief in that life is anything more than the survival in us of emotions reflecting the erroneous beliefs of primitive man?

"Il se peut que ces voix intérieures proviennent d'illusions honnêtes, entretenues par l'habitude, et que le monde ne soit qu'une amusante féerie dont aucun dieu ne se soucie. Il faut donc nous arranger de manière que, dans les deux hypothèses, nous n'ayons pas eu complètement tort. Il faut écouter les voix supérieures, mais de façon que, dans le cas où la seconde hypothèse serait la vraie, nous n'ayons pas été trop dupes. Si le monde, en effet, n'est pas chose sérieuse, ce sont les gens dogmatiques qui auront été frivoles, et les gens du monde, ceux que les théologiens traitent d'étourdis, qui auront été les vrais sages." F. Dêt., 394-5. Cf. Disc., 245; P. Isr., IV: 287.

Oddly enough, this uncertainty does not in the least interfere with positive statements on the same question elsewhere. There are passages in Renan that would do credit to any church-father. One is tempted to urge in excuse that his contradictions represent his belief at different periods of life. Such is not the fact, however; they appear in the same chapter, and even on the same page. His beliefs seem to vary not merely with his moods, but even with the requirements of euphony and rhythm in literary composition. Cf. Souv., 363.

To one point, however, in regard to religion, he has consistently held from first to last, and that is its social utility. However uncertain its doctrines may be, there can be no question, he reminds us, of the beneficent influence of religion over men's lives. V. J., 184. He goes so far as to affirm that a belief in immortality is an indispensable support of the moral life. No greater calamity could befall mankind, he declares, than the universal abandonment of this belief. Fact or fiction, what matter, if it affords inspiration to more virtuous living? In such matters, practical utility is more important than scientific accuracy.

"Let us not deceive ourselves," he writes, "man is governed by nothing but his conception of the future. A nation which *en masse* gives up all faith in what lies beyond the grave will become utterly degraded. An individual may do great things and yet not believe in immortality; but those around him must believe in it, for him and for themselves. . . . Faith in glory and all our pursuings of the ideal are but another form of faith in immortality; . . . every noble life is built, in great part, on foundations laid in the life beyond." P. Isr., IV: 285.

"Rien de grand ne se fait sans chimères. L'homme a besoin, pour déployer toute son activité, de placer en avant de lui un but capable de l'exciter. . . . Les premiers musulmans, auraient-ils marché jusqu'au bout du monde, si Aboubekr ne leur eût dit: Allez, le paradis est avant. Les *conquistadores*, eussent-ils entrepris leurs aventureuses expéditions s'ils n'eussent espéré trouver l'Eldorado, la Fontaine de Jouvence, Cipango aux toits d'or? Alexandre poursuivait les Griffons et les Arimaspes. Colomb, en rêvant les îles de Saint-Brandon et le paradis terrestre, trouva l'Amérique. Avec l'idée que le paradis est par delà, on marche toujours et on trouve mieux que le paradis." A. S., 409-10.

This view is maintained in all his writings. A disinterested moral life is impossible without illusions, and the most important of these is the belief in a life to come.

"Il vaut mieux que l'humanité ait espéré le Messie que bien

entendu telle endroit d'Isaïe où elle a cru le voir annoncé; il vaut mieux qu'elle ait cru à la résurrection que bien lu et bien compris tel passage obscur du *Livre de Job* sur la foi duquel elle a affirmé sa délivrance future. Où en serions-nous si les contemporains du Christ et les fondateurs du christianisme eussent été d'aussi bons philologues que Gésénius?" Cant., XII—XIII.

One of his last utterances on the subject is found in his preface to the *Avenir de la science*, composed nearly half a century later than the work itself:

"Ce qu'il y a de grave, c'est que nous n'entrevoyons pour l'avenir, à moins d'un retour à la crédulité, le moyen de donner à l'humanité un catéchisme désormais acceptable. Il est donc possible que la ruine des croyances idéalistes soit destinée à suivre la ruine des croyances surnaturelles, et qu'un abaissement réel du moral de l'humanité date du jour où elle a vu la réalité des choses. A force de chimères, on avait réussi à obtenir du bon gorille un effort moral surprenant; ôtées les chimères, une partie de l'énergie factice qu'elles éveillaient disparaîtra. Même la gloire, comme force de traction, suppose à quelques égards l'immortalité, le fruit n'en devant d'ordinaire être touché qu'après la mort. Supprimez l'alcool au travailleur dont il fait la force, mais ne lui demandez plus la même somme de travail.

"Je le dis franchement, je ne me figure pas comment on rebâtira, sans les anciens rêves, les assises d'une vie noble et heureuse." A. S., XVIII. Cf. V. J., 184; Dr. Ph., 356-7, 360.

This brings us to Renan's remarkable doctrine that reason, inevitably selfish as he believed it to be, is hostile to the moral life. Morality has nothing to gain from a clear insight into Nature's ways, and it has everything to lose. Philosophical *Aufklärung* is the arch-enemy of virtue, that is to say, of unselfishness.

"L'homme est si médiocre, qu'il n'est bon que quand il rêve. Il lui faut des illusions pour qu'il fasse ce qu'il devrait faire par amour du bien. Cet esclave a besoin de crainte et de

mensonges pour accomplir son devoir. On n'obtient des sacrifices de la masse qu'en lui promettant qu'elle sera payée de retour. L'abnégation du chrétien n'est, après tout, qu'un calcul habile, un placement en vue du royaume de Dieu." M.-Aur., 567. Cf. V. J., 457.

This doctrine is repeated in many places throughout his books.

"Préjugé, vanité, voilà la base de la vie. La philosophie, qui détruit les préjugés, détruit la base de la vie." Dr. Ph., 28.

"L'homme est lié par certaines ruses de la nature, telles que la religion, l'amour, le goût du bien et du vrai, tous instincts qui, si l'on s'en tient à la considération de l'intérêt égoïste, le trompent et le mènent à des fins voulues hors de lui. L'homme, par le progrès de la réflexion, reconnaît de plus en plus les roueries de la nature, démolit par la critique religion, amour, bien, vrai. Ira-t-il jusqu'au bout, ou la nature l'emportera-t-elle? Dial., 43. Cf. P. Isr., IV: 312.

In the philosophy of Renan unselfishness is made the very touch-stone of morality. His antipathy towards ethical hedonism, so marked in his earlier period, springs from this point of view. Whatever is done for pleasure, he contends, is without moral value, for pleasure-seeking is always and inevitably self-seeking.

"Le plaisir, essentiellement égoïste, est par conséquent la négation du divin, l'inverse de la religion." Q. C., 470.

And again:

"Ce qui fait que le plaisir est pour nous une chose tout à fait profane, c'est que nous le prenons comme une *jouissance personnelle*; or, la jouissance personnelle n'a absolument aucune valeur suprasensible." A. S., 405.

Even the belief in a future existence, the very foundation of morality, according to Renan, becomes morally worthless, he declares, if embraced in consequence of rational persuasion. If heaven and hell were undoubted realities, the conduct resulting from hope of the one or fear of the other would be nothing more than pursuit of self-interest. And to be sure, it is obviously the same thing in principle whether the pleasure pur-

sued is happiness on earth or blessedness in heaven, the only difference being that the latter policy is less short-sighted. A Simeon Stylites, enduring pain in this present life in order to escape the endless tortures or secure the endless joys of a life to come, is just as much pursuing his own greatest ultimate good as the veriest libertine. If these future pains and pleasures are regarded as actual facts, it is not the hermit but the libertine who fails to secure for himself the greatest balance of pleasures over pains in the end.

"Si les vérités morales étaient des résultats mathématiquement démontrés, elles perdraient tout leur prix; elles cesseraient même d'être morales, puisqu'il n'y aurait pas plus de mérite à les croire qu'à croire la géométrie et à s'arrêter devant le code pénal." Dial., 331. Cf. F. Dét., XV; also Dr. Ph., 260.

"Supposons, en effet, une preuve directe, positive, évidente pour tous, des peines et des récompenses futures; où sera le mérite de faire le bien? Il n'y aurait que des fous qui, de gaieté de coeur, courraient à leur damnation. Une foule d'âmes basses feraient leur salut cartes sur table. . . . Qui ne voit que, dans un tel système, il n'y a plus morale ni religion? Dans l'ordre moral et religieux, il est indispensable de croire sans démonstration; il ne s'agit pas de certitude, il s'agit de foi." M.-Aur., 264-5. Cf. C. d'Angl., p. 260.

These statements, taken together with those previously quoted, would seem at first glance to place Renan in a very paradoxical position: immortality as a hope is indispensable to an unselfish life, immortality as a certitude is incompatible with such a life. In this case the contradiction is only apparent, however. For even admitting that believers and unbelievers alike are governed, in the last resort, by considerations of their own greatest ultimate welfare, it is plain that their respective policies would lead to very different kinds of conduct in this present world. The one would bend his efforts to secure his own greatest happiness here and now, regardless of society at large, or showing a regard for the good of others only so far as this was necessary to secure his own; while the believer, postponing his own enjoyments to a future world, is

free to promote his neighbor's welfare, or the glory of God, quite regardless of pain or pleasure to himself. And this is all that Renan really means: A virtue that is made a matter of policy is no longer meritorious, because it no longer proceeds from unselfish motives. He does not really mean to deny that a selfish life would be very differently ordered in fact, according as it takes account or not of a life after death.

No doctrine in the realm of moral philosophy is more emphatically or more persistently affirmed by Renan than the proposition that morality, or in other words altruism, is a bequest from pre-rational or even pre-human times. Unselfishness, he believes, is always a non-rational impulse. Ascribe it to instinct, to family- or race inheritance, to social tradition, to religious belief, to what you will; but it is never the outcome of rational reflection. So far as true altruism is still to be found among men, it represents a survival from pre-rational or even pre-human times.¹⁰ Cf. James, *Var. Rel. Exp.*, 431ff.

"Aucune mère n'a besoin d'un système de philosophie morale pour aimer son enfant. Aucune jeune fille de bonne race n'est chaste en vertu d'une théorie. De même aucun homme courageux ne court à la mort mu par un raisonnement. Nous faisons le bien sans être surs qu'en le faisant nous ne sommes pas dupes; et saurions-nous de science certaine que nous le sommes, nous ferions le bien tout de même." *Dr. Ph.*, 260-1. Cf. *Dial.*, XVIII—IX; *ibid.*, 32-3, 37, 39-40; *Eccl.*, 88; *F. Dét.*, 35, 426-7; *Mor. Crit.*, 13; *Q. C.*, 128; *Souv.*, 12, 342-3, 359.

This doctrine that morality is largely a result of past habits was exemplified, as Renan believed, in his own life. Ever since leaving the church, he often declares, he subsisted on the fund of morality which he had accumulated in early youth under the influence of beliefs which he later considered illusory. *Souv.*, 12, 342-3, 346, 359; *Dial.*, XVIII—IX.

In discussing this question Renan follows Kant in drawing a sharp distinction between man's rational and his moral nature, and he adopts the terminology of his German original. The Pure Reason is contrasted with the Practical Reason.

Pure Reason, he maintains, is incapable of initiating, or even approving, an unselfish act. Altruism, Religion, Morality,—often interchangeable terms in Renan—have a transcendental source, which is called by many names: Practical Reason, Categorical Imperative, God, Universe, Nature, la Catégorie de l'Idéal, Abîme de l'Être, etc.

"The reasoning of Kant remains as true as it ever was; moral affirmation creates its object. . . . Without the hope of any recompense, man devotes himself to his duty even to death. . . . Justice, truth and goodness are willed by a higher power." P. Isr., I: XXVII—VIII. Cf. Dr. Ph., 413.

"Les croyances de la religion naturelle, dérivant toutes de l'impératif catégorique, ont l'air d'un filet qui nous enlace, d'un philtre qui nous séduit La religion est dans l'humanité l'analogue de l'instinct maternel chez les oiseaux, le sacrifice aveugle de soi à une fin inconnue, voulue par la nature;" Dial., 32. Cf. *ibid.*, 38, 30, 142; also *Réf. Int.*, 338.

"Le devoir et les instincts de nidification et de couvée chez l'oiseau ont la même origine providentielle. . . . Ces voix, tantôt douces, tantôt austères, d'où viennent-elles? Elles viennent de l'univers, ou, si l'on veut, de Dieu. L'univers, avec qui nous sommes en rapport comme par un conduit ombilical, veut le dévouement, le devoir, la vertu; il emploie, pour arriver à ses fins, la religion, la poésie, l'amour, le plaisir, toutes les déceptions. . . . La religion, résumé des besoins moraux de l'homme, la vertu, la pudeur, le désintéressement, le sacrifice, sont la voix de l'univers. Tout se résume en un acte de foi à des instincts qui nous obsèdent, sans nous convaincre, en l'obéissance à un langage venant de l'infini, langage parfaitement clair en ce qu'il nous commande, obscur en ce qu'il promet." F. Dét., 425-7.

As already observed in another connection, these inner voices of morality and religion, when examined from the point of view of man's relation to Nature's ulterior aims, are seen to be a device by which individuals are compelled to work for

the good of the whole; leading eventually, according to our author, to the evolution of God. The kind of life which these voices approve, considered apart from the satisfaction derived from this very approval, is not that which leads to a maximum of enjoyment for the individual in this present world. Obeying this oracle man is exploited in behalf of a cause entirely foreign to his own personal welfare. Dial. 29; also *ibid.* 35-6.

"La nature agit à notre égard comme envers une troupe de gladiateurs destinés à se faire tuer pour une cause qui n'est pas la leur." Dial., 40; also *cf.* 129-30.

"Nous travaillons pour un Dieu, de même que l'abeille, sans le savoir, fait son miel pour l'homme." Dial., 45; 30-1.

"L'homme est comme l'ouvrier des Gobelins qui tisse à l'envers une tapisserie dont il ne voit pas le dessein." Dial., 28.

This idea of antagonism between Nature and man seems to have been taken from Schopenhauer. At any rate, both Schopenhauer and Fichte are repeatedly mentioned in connection with the doctrine. *Cf.* Dial., 42; also Séailles, *E. R.*, 282, note 1. But while accepting the premises of the German pessimist, Renan applies them in a very different way. He fully admits that man is exploited by Nature for certain ulterior aims, and he also concedes that rebellion against this arrangement is useless. But he differs from Schopenhauer in concluding that precisely this conflict between Nature and man is the source from which morality springs; for morality is essentially a cheerful co-operation with the deific tendencies of the universe.

"La moralité se réduit ainsi à la soumission. L'immoralité, c'est la révolte contre un état de choses dont on voit la duperie. Il faut à la fois la voir et s'y soumettre." Dial., 43.

"Le mal, c'est de se révolter contre la nature, quand on a vu qu'elle nous trompe. . . . Son but est bon; veuillons ce qu'elle veut. La vertu est un *amen* obstiné, dit aux fins obscures que poursuit la Providence par nous." Dial., 46; but *cf.* *A. S.*, 9.

"Pourquoi dire que la nature nous trompe," asks M. Séailles, "si son but est bon? Que l'utilitaire s'indigne, soit, il est exploité! mais l'idéaliste, le soldat du combat de Dieu?"

. . . . Est-il besoin de faire remarquer l'incohérence mythologique du langage de Renan: *numina nomina*. . . . La vertu est une illusion divine, providentielle, parce qu'il n'y a ni Dieu, ni Providence; car, dans l'hypothèse où la vertu serait divine, providentielle, elle ne serait plus illusion." E. R. 283; 318, note.

It is interesting to note that in this view of morality as being essentially obedience to a higher power, Renan is virtually returning to the teachings of the Church; to the very position, that is, which in *L'Avenir de la science* he repudiates as a humiliating subjection incompatible with the dignity of man. Speaking of the christian ascetic, he wrote:

"Non seulement il négligea totalement le vrai et le beau (la philosophie, la science, la poésie étaient des vanités); mais, en s'attachant exclusivement au bien, il le conçut sous sa forme la plus mesquine: le bien fut pour lui la réalisation de la volonté d'un être supérieur, une sorte de sujétion humiliante pour la dignité humaine: car la réalisation du bien moral n'est pas plus une obéissance à des lois imposées que la réalisation du beau dans une oeuvre d'art n'est l'exécution de certaines règles." A. S., 9.

Contrasting this earlier position with his latest creed, the principal difference appears to be this: while in both phases morality is conceived as obedience to a transcendental authority, in his later position this authority is no longer determinate; the moral imperative has been emptied of its definite content. Morality is no longer obedience to a God whose will is defined in a bible and summarized in the decalogue; it is obedience to a Nature who commands nothing in particular yet requires unconditional surrender to her commands; a Nature of whom nothing is known save that, tyrant-like, she exploits her own children for her selfish ends by duping them into unselfish lives.¹¹

But is this "obedience" to Nature, or to its Author, anything more, after all, than making a virtue of necessity? Renan repeatedly asserts that against Nature's dupery man is powerless. Obedience to Nature is regarded as a species of

slavery, in which the slave is made to hug the very chains by which he is held to his task. These chains are his instincts, his desires, his aspirations, especially the "other-profitting" instincts by means of which individuals are duped into sacrificing their own present pleasures to Nature's ulterior aims.

"L'homme dépend de l'ensemble de l'univers, lequel a un but et fait tout converger à ce but. L'homme est un être subordonné; quoi qu'il fasse, il adore, il sert." *N. Hist. Rel.*, XV; *Dial.*, 45.

". . . La nature triomphera toujours; elle a trop bien arrangé les choses, elle a trop bien pipé les dés; elle atteindra, quoi que nous fassions, son but, qui est de nous tromper à son profit." *Dial.*, 42; also 28.

In view of such statements, and remembering that, according to his own theory, meritorious acts alone can properly be called virtuous, how is it possible to affirm that virtue consists in obedience to Nature, and then affirm in the same breath that man cannot possibly refuse the obedience? Is he not, as some one has said of Hegel, devising a logic for his own private use? Is he not, in the strictest sense of the terms, making a virtue of necessity?

It is true that Renan distinguishes between cheerful and grudging obedience, graceful and ungraceful service, and declares the former alone to be moral, as in the following passage (among many others):

"La vertu, c'est de contribuer avec joie et empressement au bien suprême. Le mal, c'est de servir sans grâce, de ressembler au soldat médiocre qui murmure contre son chef, tout en allant au feu comme les autres." *N. Hist. Rel.*, XV.

But even so, what more does morality become than a cheerful submission to the inevitable? And what else do we mean by making a virtue of necessity?^{11a}

Man's obedience to Nature, again, viewed from another side, becomes altruism, which in Renan's terminology is the whole of morality.

"Chose singulière," he writes in his review of Sainte-Beuve's *Port-Royal*, 1860; "le principe qui fait les bons écrivains est

le même que celui qui fait les saints. L'amour-propre, l'envie de briller sont le défaut capital, qu'il s'agisse de morale religieuse ou qu'il s'agisse d'élocution; l'oubli de soi, le mépris du succès sont la règle du bien dans tous les genres." N. Hist. Rel., 492-3.

There is no contradiction, of course, between his conception of morality as obedience to Nature, and his conception of it as altruism; it is both, only from different points of view. Morality is obedience,—with reference to the source of the impulses and instincts by which unselfish action is prompted; it is altruism,—with reference to the end which the impulse seeks to attain. The element of altruism, in fact, has to be made very prominent in order to guard this conception of morality against obvious misunderstandings. For if virtue is obedience to Nature, what then, it might be asked, is vice? Are murder, theft and adultery less "natural" than faith, hope and charity? It is therefore important to lay stress on the motive, and not on the motive merely as such, but on a conscious and deliberate recognition of the motive as altruistic.

But in thus attempting to guard our author's conception against absurd misconstructions, we are landed, in fact, in another contradiction. For how can deliberate altruism be reconciled with his doctrine that Reason is always and inevitably self-centered? But this point we shall have occasion to discuss more fully as we proceed.

A threefold distinction seems necessary in order to bring out Renan's full meaning. Altruism may be viewed from three sides, according as we contemplate the result of an act, or its cause, or a consciousness of the cause on the part of the actor. It is this last phase alone which Renan has in mind when he speaks of altruism as virtue, and of virtue as obedience to Nature. Throughout his moral philosophy, his attention seems directed, not to the goodness or badness of acts as determined by their consequences, but to the character or disposition from which they proceed. For an act to be altruistic, and therefore virtuous, in Renan's sense of the terms, an act must reveal not only *de facto* obedience to unselfish impulses, but a conscious-

ness of the impulse as being unselfish. A man is not yet virtuous because his conduct is in fact unselfish, whether in motive or result, but only when the unselfish motive is knowingly and deliberately followed as such. Through the instrumentality of "other-profitting" instincts,—to adopt a bad word,—man is exploited, according to this view, whether he will or not, in the interests of universal evolution, or the good of the universe. Even when individuals imagine themselves pursuing their own interests they are all the time unconsciously furthering Nature's ulterior aims. But this is not yet virtue, or merit. It is only when we come to be clearly aware of this dupery, and yet cooperate, knowingly and deliberately, with Nature's plans, that our obedience is entitled to the lofty appellation of virtue.

It is needless to say that Renan made no effort to apply this exacting conception of virtue to work-a-day life. In the task of allotting the prizes for virtue known as the *Prix Montyon*, awarded each year by the Académie Française, and on which Renan was himself several times commissioned to report, he appears to have made no attempt to ascertain as a preliminary qualification to compete for this prize, whether the candidates were clearly aware of their being exploited in behalf of deific evolution.

It is interesting to note that in his conception of morality as altruism likewise, Renan is making a virtue of necessity; for he holds that a certain amount of unselfishness is unavoidable in every human life. An utterly selfish life is an impossibility.

"Prétendre enlever de ce monde le sentiment de la piété et réduire tout au pur égoïsme est aussi impossible qu'enlever à la femme ses organes de mère. L'égoïste lui-même, qui prétend dresser la théorie de l'intérêt bien entendu, est dupe de la nature. L'égoïste donne à chaque heure mille démentis à son système; la vie d'un égoïste est un tissu d'inconséquences, d'actions qui, à son point de vue, sont absurdes et folles." *Dial.*, 37; 39-40.

A similar paradox appears in his statements regarding the relation of morality to reason. On the one hand he insists, as

we have seen, that reason is hostile to altruism, in other words to morality and religion. He deplores the fact that humanity, in these days of rationalism, should be living upon its moral capital, the laborious savings of past generations.

“Les vieilles croyances au moyen desquelles on aidait l’homme à pratiquer la vertu sont ébranlées, et elles n’ont pas été remplacées. Pour nous autres, esprits cultivés, les équivalents de ces croyances que fournit l’idéalisme suffisent tout à fait; car nous agissons sous l’empire d’anciennes habitudes; nous sommes comme ces animaux à qui les physiologistes enlèvent le cerveau, et qui n’en continuent pas moins certaines fonctions de la vie par l’effet du pli contracté. Mais ces mouvements instinctifs s’affaibliront avec le temps. . . . Les personnes religieuses vivent d’une ombre. Nous vivons de l’ombre d’une ombre. De quoi vivra-t-on après nous?” Dial, XVIII-IX. F. Dét., XVIII.

But on the other hand he just as frequently declares that morality and religion are beyond the reach of rational argumentation. Compared with the deep-rooted non-rational impulses of man’s moral nature, reason is but a superficial veneering, powerless to suppress the altruistic instincts which determine our practice in spite of our theories. There will always be those, he declares, who practice virtue without stopping to make sure that they are not fools for their pains.

“Prêcher à l’homme de ne pas se dévouer est comme prêcher à l’oiseau de ne pas faire son nid, et de ne pas nourrir ses petits. Cela est très-peu dangereux; l’homme et l’oiseau continueront toujours leur éternel manège, car la nature en a besoin. Une ingénieuse providence prend ses précautions pour assurer la somme de vertu nécessaire à la sustentation de l’univers.” Dial., 32-3.

“Ce que veut l’univers, il l’imposera toujours; car il a pour appuyer ses volontés des ruses inouïes. Les raisonnements les plus évidents des critiques ne feront rien pour démolir ces saintes illusions.” F. Dét., 426-7.

“Les croyances nécessaires sont au-dessus de toute atteinte. L’humanité ne nous écoutera que dans la mesure où nos sys-

tèmes conviendront à ses devoirs et à ses instincts. Disons ce que nous pensons; la femme n'en continuera pas moins sa joyeuse cantilène, l'enfant n'en deviendra pas plus soucieux, ni la jeunesse moins enivrée; l'homme vertueux restera vertueux; la carmélite continuera à macérer sa chair, la mère à remplir ses devoirs, l'oiseau à chanter, l'abeille à faire son miel." Eccl., 88; repeated in P. Isr., V: 159.

There is no real contradiction, however, between these statements and the assertion that reason is hostile to virtue. Rationalism injures altruism, yet altruism survives rationalism. Both statements would seem to be true. A society which for many generations has been accustomed, like modern Europe, to associate virtuous living with religious beliefs, is certain to have its morality injuriously affected by a philosophy which tends to subvert those beliefs. It is a matter of daily observation that what is known as "*Aufklärung*" has no tendency to improve morals. But on the other hand, it is also true that no amount of rationalization can permanently destroy the moral life of the race. Renan's meaning appears to be that altruistic impulses, being matters of instinct, will always exist; but that it is only in virtue of certain illusions that these impulses, and the conduct they prompt, can secure the sanction of reason.

By reason, indeed, Renan simply means the capacity for cool, dispassionate judgment of values. Rational judgments, *ex vi termini*, are dispassionate judgments. But dispassionate deliberation in morals, he believed, is essentially and inevitably self-centered; self-interest being the pivot, so to speak, on which the deliberation must turn. Hence reason becomes, in morals, a capacity for the calculation of self-interest, and therefore a thorough-going and consistent rationalism must of course be strictly incompatible with an unselfish life. From this position Renan never swerves. A conscious and deliberate renunciation of self-interest, he insists, is never obtained through rational persuasion; but he was very confident that humanity will never fail to supply all the illusions and sophistries necessary for the subsistence of moral ideals and virtuous habits.

"Une seule chose est sûre, c'est que l'humanité tirera de son

sein tout ce qui est nécessaire en fait d'illusions pour qu'elle remplisse ses devoirs et accomplisse sa destinée." Dial., XIX.

We must remember, however, that all these illusions are effective only because they are taken, or rather mistaken, for truths. However important they may be in sustaining the moral life, the time must come when they are seen to be fictions, at least by a disillusioned few. What then shall be the attitude of these philosophers towards the rest of mankind? In the event of a real conflict between the claims of truth and the requirements of morality, which shall prevail? Can it ever be right to suppress the truth in the interests of morality, real or supposed?

As an example we may take once more the belief in a future judgment. Suppose it to be known by the initiated (among whom we must reckon Renan), beyond the possibility of a doubt, that belief in a judgment after death is based on illusion. Shall the fact be openly professed, even though it is certain to lead to a lowering of the standard of morals?

Here again it is possible to quote Renan on both sides of the question. In one of his last utterances on the subject, his preface to the *Avenir de la science*, he insists that even truth itself is a secondary consideration when it comes into conflict with the demands of morality.

"Je veux certes la liberté de la pensée; car le vrai a ses droits comme le bien, et on ne gagne rien à ces timides mensonges qui ne trompent personne et n'aboutissent qu'à l'hypocrisie. . . . Mais, je l'avoue, la science même et la critique sont à mes yeux des choses secondaires auprès de la nécessité de conserver la tradition du bien." Mor. Crit., III—IV; also, XVII.

More frequently, however, he insists that truth must come first, regardless of consequences to religion and morals; for the advancement of truth is an end to which morality is merely a means. F. Dét., 436-7.

"L'ordre social, comme l'ordre théologique, provoque la question: Qui sait si la vérité n'est pas triste? L'édifice de la société humaine porte sur un grand vide. Nous avons osé le

dire. Rien de plus dangereux que de patiner sur une couche de glace sans songer combien cette couche est mince. Je n'ai jamais pu croire que, dans aucun ordre de choses, il fût mauvais d'y voir trop clair. Toute vérité est bonne à savoir. Car toute vérité clairement sue rend fort ou prudent." Avant-propos to the *Prêtre de Nemi*, Dr. Ph., 263.

In his *Examen de conscience philosophique* he seems to uphold the extreme position that man exists for truth, not truth for man. A planet on which the postulates of morality are incompatible with the facts of science were better wiped away:

"Si l'erreur était la condition de la moralité humaine, il n'y aurait aucune raison pour s'intéresser à un globe voué à l'ignorance. Nous aimons l'humanité, parce qu'elle produit la science; nous tenons à la moralité, parce que des races honnêtes peuvent seules être des races scientifiques. Si on posait l'ignorance comme borne nécessaire de l'humanité, nous ne voyons plus aucun motif de tenir à son existence. . . . Le retour de l'humanité à ses vieilles erreurs, censées indispensables à sa moralité, serait pire que son entière démoralisation."¹² F. Dét., 436-7. Cf. *ibid.*, XXIV, 402; A. S., 93.

Of all the contradictions in Renan's writings the most astounding is contained in the following passage, when contrasted with the doctrine which prevails in his later years:

"Que les personnes qui ne croient pas à la réalité du devoir, qui regardent la morale comme une illusion, prêchent la thèse désolante de l'abrutissement nécessaire d'une partie de l'espèce humaine, rien de mieux; mais pour nous qui croyons que la moralité est vraie d'une manière absolue, une telle doctrine nous est interdite. A tout prix, et quoi qu'il arrive, *que plus de lumière se fasse*. Voilà notre devise; nous ne l'abandonnerons jamais." Réf. Int., 308. Cf. Disc., 232-3; 258-9; 39.

"*Nous ne l'abandonnerons jamais*." But alas for human resolutions! L'homme propose mais Dieu dispose. Only a few months later, the very doctrines so indignantly repudiated here: "la morale comme une illusion," "la thèse désolante de l'abrutissement nécessaire d'une partie de l'espèce humaine," are developed *in extenso* by Renan himself in the *Dialogues philoso-*

phiques, and thenceforward become dominant thoughts in all his political philosophy.

The above passage is taken from a public address on the place of the State in the education of children, delivered in April, 1869, shortly before the outbreak of the war, and during his candidacy for the electoral district of Seine-et-Marne. Can it be that his liberal attitude towards popular education in this address was determined by his candidacy for the Chamber of Deputies?

But it seems more likely, in view of his independent character, that his statement truly represented his dominant belief at the time; and that his espousal of the opposite view immediately after the war is to be ascribed to the change of political organization which followed that disastrous event. Idealist that he was, he seems always to have been opposed to the prevailing régime; a democrat under the empire, an aristocrat under democracy.

Not that his earlier beliefs were ever abandoned, however. The old and the new, regardless of consistency, are affirmed alternately, as mood or necessity prompt. *Audiatur et altera pars!* Even in his latest writings, his faith in rational progress, and his earlier enthusiasm for popular education, are frequently and emphatically affirmed, though the latter on different grounds.

"*Mieux vaut un peuple immoral qu'un peuple fanatique; car les masses immorales ne sont pas gênantes, tandis que les masses fanatiques abêtissent le monde, et un monde condamné à la bêtise n'a plus de raison pour que je m'y intéresse; j'aime autant le voir mourir. Supposons les orangers atteints d'une maladie dont on ne puisse les guérir qu'en les empêchant de produire des oranges. Cela ne vaudrait pas la peine, puisque l'oranger qui ne produit pas d'oranges n'est plus bon à rien.*"
A. S., X.

An intermediate position is taken in the *Avenir de la science*, which represents the climax of the age of reason in his own life. In the long run, he there maintains, truth and utility, the interests of science and those of morality, must coin-

cide. It is only during periods of transition, like that from supernaturalism to naturalism, that the truth may seem hostile to morals. The only morality that is ever injured by truth is a morality based on error. Reason, however inadequate and disappointing in many ways, is still the best guide we have. (Souv., 408: letter of Sep. 11, 1846, to his friend M. Cognat.) Rationalism has never yet been the cause of social degeneration. In fact, he insists, the experiment has never been tried, for the age of reason is even now only in its dawn. A. S., 74. Cf. *ibid.*, 68; 93; 96; 101; XIX. N. Hist Rel., 505. Mor. Crit., III, VII.

Turning now to the question of moral criteria: it is very obvious that Renan's definition of morality as unselfishness cannot furnish a standard of right action, for the simple reason that "selfish" and "unselfish" may mean as many different things as there are different characters or selves. Selfish conduct is presumably that which secures, or is expected to secure, the agent's own welfare, real or supposed, regardless of the welfare of others. But obviously, different kinds of conduct will bring satisfaction to different characters. The practice of virtue is pleasurable to the virtuous as vice is to the vicious. If therefore, an act becomes selfish whenever it aims at the satisfaction or pleasure of the agent, it follows that the practice of virtue by the virtuous is selfish; and if all selfish action is wrong, it must be wrong for the virtuous to practice virtue, which, as Euclid would say, is absurd.

And besides, if all action which aims at the agent's own welfare is wrong, it is not certain that any opportunity for right action remains. It would be easy to show, indeed, from Renan's own words, that morality is at bottom nothing more than a fiction. For if it is true that reason is utterly and unavoidably selfish, as he insists, and that hence there can be no such thing as a deliberately unselfish act; and if, as he further maintains, deliberate unselfishness alone can be called meritorious, then does it not follow that the very idea of merit, or of morality, rests on illusion?

But this is as far as possible from the position expressly main-

tained by him elsewhere. For not only is faith in morality declared to be the most certain of all human beliefs, it is the only absolute certitude in the entire realm of philosophy. Speaking of the articles which make up his *Essais de morale et de critique*, he says:

"Tous se résument en une pensée que je mets fort au-dessus des opinions et des hypothèses, c'est que le morale est la chose sérieuse et vraie par excellence, et qu'elle suffit pour donner à la vie un sens et un but." *Mor. Crit.*, I. Cf. *Frag.*, 311; also, Séailles, *E. R.*, 218.

M. Séailles comments on these passages:

"A regarder les choses du point de vue de l'espace et du temps, il y a quelque chose de monstrueux dans la primauté que Renan accorde aux sciences morales, c'est revenir à l'anthropomorphisme sans prendre la peine de le justifier." *E. R.*, 340.

The truth is that we are confronted again with the capital defect of Renan's moral philosophy, as of all his philosophical speculations: it is either so incurably vague as to afford no definite information, or so hopelessly self-contradictory as to baffle all attempts at reconciliation, and even at clear and consistent exposition. His language is loose and elastic, supple and evasive to the last degree. Moreover, he seems never to have examined the problems of moral philosophy from a psychological point of view. There is nothing in his writings to indicate that he ever went to the trouble of analyzing men's moral judgments with reference to the ultimate reasons why acts are currently judged to be good or bad, or motives right or wrong. The only statement in his books which might suggest a familiarity with the subject occurs in one of his speeches before the *Académie Française*, in which all existing theories concerning the origin of morality and the ultimate grounds of obligation are declared to be untenable. Cf. *Disc.*, 196-7.

It is true that in all his utterances on the subject he declares or implies that morality consists in unselfishness; but it is too absurd to suppose that so clear-headed a man as Renan would expressly maintain that all selfish action is wrong, and

all unselfish action right. The truth is that he approaches the problem from a different point of view. Morality, in his conception of it, is not so much a question of right and wrong, or of reasons for right and wrong, as a question of merit or absence of merit. Unselfish conduct, he would say with Kant, to whom his impressions in moral philosophy all appear to go back, is meritorious conduct; and that is his reason for calling it virtuous.

But even so he gets himself hopelessly involved in tautology, or entangled in contradictions, the moment he is pressed to define his terms. What, for example, does he mean by meritorious conduct?

In all the accepted meanings of the term, merit is rested upon virtue, and not the other way round. An action is meritorious because it is virtuous, or virtuous to an unusual degree. Merit is simply the value set upon virtue. The weaker the flesh the greater the merit if we do right. The harder it is to rise early in the morning, the greater the merit in doing so. Cf. Leslie Stephen, *Sci. Eth.*, Lond., 1882, p. 311; Alexander, *Mor. Order and Prog.*, Lond., 1891, p. 194; Kant, *Met. d. Sit.*, 1797, p. 29.

To make merit the basis of virtue, therefore, involves a logical circle. For if we ask for the ground of the merit, the only answer can be that it is virtue, or an unusual degree of virtue. The tautology is obvious: unselfish conduct is virtuous because it is meritorious, and it is meritorious because it is unselfish and therefore virtuous; in other words, it is good because it is good.

And this really seems to be Renan's position. He expressly declares, over and over again, that no reason can be given why a man should be virtuous. Whenever an individual is truly unselfish, it is in consequence of some mysterious, transcendental compulsion. A moral hero can give no rational grounds for his heroism.

"La signification transcendante de l'acte vertueux est précisément qu'en le faisant, on ne pourra pas bien dire pourquoi on le fait. Il n'y a pas d'acte vertueux qui puisse raison-

nablement se déduire. Le héros, quand il se met à réfléchir, trouve qu'il a agi comme un être absurde, et c'est justement pour cela qu'il a été un héros. Il a obéi à un ordre supérieur, à un oracle infailible, à une voix qui commande de la façon la plus claire, sans donner ses raisons." Disc., 196-7; Cf. Mor. Crit., II.

But again we must ask: Where is the merit of unselfishness, if it springs, not from the human will, but from some unknown, irresistible source? What merit can there be in doing what we cannot avoid?

The attempt to bring logical coherence into Renan's ethical teachings leads, in fact, as already suggested, to the strange result that there is no such thing as a truly meritorious or moral act, in his own sense of the terms; for the only conduct to which merit attaches is not in reality the work of man.

This seems another instance of the persistence in him of theological influences. If in the place of his transcendental compulsion we put the christian idea of divine grace, we have the theological doctrine that whatever is good or meritorious in human conduct proceeds from the grace of God. In the eyes of Renan as in those of Saint Augustine, man is incapable of even resolving a truly virtuous act of his own free, unaided choice.

"*Quid habes quod non accepisti?*" Le dogme de la grâce est le plus vrai des dogmes chrétiens. L'effort inconscient vers le bien et le vrai qui est dans l'univers joue son coup de dé par chacun de nous. Tout arrive, les quaternes comme le reste. Nous pouvons déranger le dessein providentiel dont nous sommes l'objet; nous ne sommes pour presque rien dans sa réussite." Souv., 373.

Thus we are brought around at last, unawares, to the everlastingly debatable question of the free will, and perhaps this is the most convenient place to state Renan's position in regard to this time-honored problem.

He has nowhere discussed the question *ex cathedra*, fortunately for this chapter, and even his passing references are few and brief.

The term free-will, as Höffding and others have shown, is played fast and loose with in philosophical discussion, being currently used in half a dozen or more quite different meanings. Cf. Höffding's *Ethik*, Germ. transl., Leipz., 1888. Renan's utterances on this topic are altogether too vague to place him on either the determinist or the indeterminist side in this controversy.

He insists that man is a free moral agent (whatever that may mean). Disc., III. An essential condition of right action, he declares, is the possibility of wrong action. Q. C., 65. It is man's mission in the world to substitute reason for blind physical necessity. A. S., 31.

This view is more fully and more clearly set forth in the following anecdote, which incidentally illustrates Renan's habit of reflecting upon his own actions, and perpetually revising his own conclusions.

"Je vis un jour dans un bois un essaim de vilains petits insectes, qui avaient entouré de leurs filets une jeune plante et suçaient ses pousses vertes avec un si laid caractère de parasitisme, que cela faisait répugnance. J'eus un instant l'idée de les détruire. Puis je me dis: Ce n'est pas leur faute s'il sont laids; c'est une façon de vivre. Il est d'un petit esprit, me disais-je, de moraliser la nature et de lui imposer nos jugements. Mais maintenant je vois que j'eus tort; j'aurais dû les tuer; car la mission de l'homme dans la nature c'est de réformer le laid et l'immoral." A. S., note 182.

The most definite of his utterances on the question of the free will occurs in the *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, where the views of the Arabian philosopher are endorsed in the following words:

"Ibn-Roschd a . . . soutenu . . . les vraies théories de la philosophie sur la liberté. L'homme n'est ni absolument libre ni absolument prédestiné. La liberté envisagée dans l'âme, est entière et sans restriction; mais elle est limitée par la fatalité des circonstances extérieures. La cause efficiente de nos actes est en nous; mais la cause occasionnelle est hors de nous." Averr., 159-60.

From a note to the *Avenir de la science* it appears that the

reality of man's freedom was so unquestioningly assumed by Renan as an indisputable fact, that it served him as a criterion of philosophical truth.

"Qu'il me suffise de dire que je crois à une raison vivante de toute chose, et que j'admets la liberté et la personnalité humaine comme des faits évidents; que par conséquent toute doctrine qui serait amenée logiquement à les nier serait fausse à mes yeux." A. S., note 14.

It should be noticed, however, that all these passages belong to his earliest period, immediately following his separation from the church. In his later works there does not appear to be even a passing reference to this classical product of scholastic lore.

Returning to our question of moral criteria:

The only standard of ethical judgments to which Renan has anywhere expressly declared his personal allegiance is the esthetic standard, which in his earlier days he believed to be destined to supplant all other standards of right, in proportion as humanity progresses in culture.

"Je reconnais que le sens moral ou ses équivalents sont de l'essence de l'humanité; . . . Il y a dans l'humanité une faculté ou un besoin, une capacité, en un mot, qui est comblée de nos jours par la morale, . . . Je conçois de même pour l'avenir que le mot morale devienne impropre et soit remplacé par un autre. Pour mon usage particulier, j'y substitue de préférence le nom esthétique. En face d'une action, je me demande plutôt si elle est belle ou laide, que bonne ou mauvaise, et je crois avoir là un bon *critérium*; car avec la simple morale qui fait l'honnête homme, on peut encore mener une assez mesquine vie." A. S., 177.

"Sois beau, et alors fais à chaque instant ce que t'inspirera ton cœur," voilà toute la morale. Toutes les autres règles sont fautives et mensongères dans leur forme absolue. Les règles générales ne sont que des expédients mesquins pour suppléer à l'absence du grand sens moral, qui suffit à lui seul pour révéler en toute occasion à l'homme ce qui est le plus beau." A. S., 179-80; 475; F. Dét., 333.

“Moi qui suis cultivé, je ne trouve pas de mal en moi, et spontanément en toute chose je me porte à ce qui me semble le plus beau. Si tous étaient aussi cultivés que moi, tous seraient comme moi dans l'heureuse impossibilité de mal faire. . . . La morale a été conçue jusqu'ici d'une manière fort étroite, comme une obéissance à une loi, comme une lutte intérieure entre des lois opposées. Pour moi, je déclare que quand je fais bien, je n'obéis à personne, je ne livre aucune bataille et ne remporte aucune victoire. . . . L'homme élevé n'a qu'à suivre la délicieuse pente de son impulsion intime; il pourrait adopter la devise de St. Augustin. . . . ‘Fais ce que tu voudras’; car il ne peut vouloir que de belles choses. L'homme vertueux est un artiste qui réalise le beau dans une vie humaine comme le statuaire le réalise sur le marbre, comme le musicien par des sons. Y a-t-il obéissance et lutte dans l'acte du statuaire et du musicien?” A. S., 354-5. Cf. James, Var. Rel. Exp., 80.

The religion of the future, he prophesies, will be a pure humanism, “c'est à dire le culte de tout ce qui est de l'homme, la vie entière sanctifiée et élevée à une valeur morale. *Soigner sa belle humanité* (Schiller) sera alors la Loi et les Prophètes.” A. S., 101.

“Tout ce qui s'attache à la vie supérieure de l'homme, à cette vie par laquelle il se distingue de l'animal, tout cela est sacré, tout cela est digne de la passion des belles âmes. . . . L'homme parfait serait celui qui serait à la fois poète, philosophe, savant, homme vertueux.” A. S., 11. Cf. *ibid.*, 355; M.-Aur., 554; Mor. Crit., 367.

In the following passage we have an interesting example of Renan's application of this criterion of right to a concrete instance: the institution of *suttee* among the natives of India. The English are severely condemned for attempting to repress this beautiful effusion of idealism, that is to say the burning of women alive.

“Les Anglais ont cru faire pour la saine morale en interdisant dans l'Inde les processions ensanglantées par des sacrifices volontaires, le suicide de la femme sur le tombeau

du mari. Étrange méprise! Croyez-vous que ce fanatique qui va poser avec joie sa tête sous les roues du char de Jagat-nata n'est pas plus heureux et plus beau que vous, insipides marchands? Croyez-vous qu'il ne fait pas plus d'honneur à la nature humaine en témoignant, d'une façon irrationnelle sans doute mais puissante, qu'il y a dans l'homme des instincts supérieurs à tous les désirs du fini et à l'amour de soi-même? Il faut voir dans ces actes la fascination que l'infini exerce sur l'homme, l'enthousiasme impersonnel, le culte du suprasensible. Et c'est à ces superbes débordements des grands instincts de la nature humaine que vous venez de tracer des limites, avec votre petite morale et votre étroit bon sens." A. S., 87.

Is any further proof needed of the insufficiency and unreliableness of the beauty standard as a criterion of right and wrong?

In another passage from the same book, monasticism is pronounced more beautiful than industrialism; are we to conclude that it is therefore morally more right? Cf. *Mor. Crit.*, 356; *Nouv. Ét. Rel.*, 337-8.

I cannot resist quoting two more passages on this topic, showing what opposite judgments he himself passed on the same characters in the same book.

"J'aime mieux un iogui, j'aime mieux un mouni de l'Inde, j'aime mieux Siméon Stylite mangé des vers sur son étrange piédestal qu'un prosaïque industriel, capable de suivre pendant vingt ans une même pensée de fortune. Héros de la vie désintéressée, saints, apôtres, mounis, solitaires, cénobites, ascètes de tous les siècles . . . que vous avez mieux compris la vie que ceux qui la prennent comme un étroit calcul d'intérêt, comme une lutte insignifiante d'ambition ou de vanité."¹³ A. S., 84-5.

With this passage in mind, turn to the following, written the same year:

"L'abstinence et la mortification sont des vertus de barbares et d'hommes matériels, qui, sujets à de grossiers appétits, ne conçoivent rien de plus héroïque que d'y résister. . . Aux yeux d'hommes grossiers, un homme qui jeûne, qui se flagelle,

qui est chaste, qui passe sa vie sur une colonne, est l'idéal de la vertu. . . L'abstinence affectée prouve qu'on fait beaucoup de cas des choses dont on se prive." A. S., 403-4.

Taking the two statements together, it would be easy to show from his own words that Renan was "*un homme matériel*," "*un homme grossier*," when he penned his rhapsodic admiration of the vermin-eaten hermit on his column. That would be untrue, however, as well as unkind. It is simply another instance of the countless conflicting opinions expressed in his books, according as he gives expression to the idealistic values of his poetic temperament or to the subtle speculations of an analytic mind.

His preference for the esthetic standard in morals, it may be noted in passing, is entirely in keeping with his pronounced aversion for logic. Esthetic impressionism in ethics fits admirably with the perpetual tergiversation and mercurial fickleness of his general philosophy; both alike affording release from the odious fetters of logical consistency. It is another evidence of the wonderful versatility of his mind, perpetually oscillating between different points of view, and delighting in the sense of its own ubiquity. Renan could not make up his mind to exclude from his appreciation anything that might possibly enrich his collection of intellectual and spiritual curiosities. Logical consistency seemed to him too great a price to pay for this self-impoverishment. The good, the beautiful and the true, in all their various manifestations, found eager and ardent recognition from his pen, quite regardless whether or not his esthetic appreciations were consistent with his intellectual ones. An institution might be good but not beautiful, or beautiful but not good; a doctrine might be true but injurious, or useful but false, or beautiful without being either true or good; but this he considered no ground for withholding his recognition of their own peculiar merits. His exclusive aim at all times was sincerity, and the reconciliation of his separate sincerities he has left to his readers, or rather expositors.

Renan's emphasis on the esthetic side of life in the period immediately following his separation from the church appears

to have been a reaction against Christian asceticism. He reproaches the church for its one-sided emphasis upon goodness, to the neglect or even exclusion of truth and beauty. Human perfection, he insists, implies intellectual and esthetic culture as well as moral; and this remained a favorite topic with him to the end of his life.

"On s'imagine trop souvent," he writes "que la moralité seule fait la perfection, que la poursuite du vrai et du beau ne constitue qu'une jouissance, que l'homme parfait, c'est l'honnête homme, le frère morave par exemple. Le modèle de la perfection nous est donné par l'humanité elle-même; la vie la plus parfaite est celle qui représente le mieux toute l'humanité. Or l'humanité cultivée n'est pas seulement morale; elle est encore savante, curieuse, poétique, passionnée." A. S., 12. Cf. *ibid.*, 355; *Mor. Crit.*, 367.

In his juvenile enthusiasm he even goes so far as to hope that some day a more completely human moral ideal may be evolved, "— un Christ qui ne représenterait plus seulement le côté moral à sa plus haute puissance, mais encore le côté esthétique et scientifique de l'humanité." A. S., 13.

This alleged one-sidedness of the Christian ideal of human perfection is reaffirmed, more than thirty years later, in his *Marc-Aurèle*, and indeed to the end of his days:

"Le défaut du christianisme apparaît bien ici. Il est trop uniquement moral; la beauté, chez lui, est tout à fait sacrifiée. Or, aux yeux d'une philosophie complète, la beauté, loin d'être un avantage superficiel, un danger, un inconvénient, est un don de Dieu, comme la vertu. Elle vaut la vertu; la femme belle exprime aussi bien une face du but divin, une des fins de Dieu, que l'homme de génie, ou la femme vertueuse. Elle le sent, et de là sa fierté. . . . Elle sait bien qu'elle compte entre les premières manifestations de Dieu. . . . La femme, en se parant, accomplit un devoir; . . . la plus belle oeuvre de Dieu, c'est la beauté de la femme. *M.-Aur.*, 554-5. Cf. *Souv.*, VIII-IX, 14-15, 33-4, 114.

But in later years he applied this principle of all-sided development, more broadly, to humanity as a whole, rather than

to separate institutions, or to individual men. He seems to have held in his latest phase that the ideal life for a given individual at any time depends on a great many things: his age, history, rank, social function, his talents, opportunities, and so forth:

"Chaque classe de la société est un rouage, un bras de levier dans cette immense machine. Voilà pourquoi chacune a ses vertus. Nous sommes tous des fonctions de l'univers; le devoir consiste à ce que chacun remplisse bien sa fonction." *Dial.*, 132-3.

"Il importe peu que St Vincent de Paul n'ait pas été un grand esprit. Raphael n'aurait rien gagné à être bien réglé dans ses moeurs. L'effort divin qui est en tout se produit par les justes, les savants, les artistes. Chacun a sa part. Le devoir de Goethe fut d'être égoïste pour son oeuvre. L'immoralité transcendante de l'artiste est à sa façon moralité suprême, si elle sert à l'accomplissement de la particulière mission divine dont chacun est chargé ici-bas." *Dial.*, 133. Cf. *F. Dét.*, 382-3. *Réf. Int.*, 2; *A. S.*, VIII-X; Cf. *F. Dét.*, 110; also Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics*, 3rd ed., p. 339.

"La fête de l'univers manquerait de quelque chose, si le monde n'était peuplé que de fanatiques iconoclastes et de lourdauds vertueux."^{13a}

But do not these later statements furnish a complete answer to his earlier criticisms on the one-sidedness of the Christian ideal of goodness? The special emphasis laid by the Christian religion on moral excellence is simply, "from a cosmical standpoint," a case of what the economists call division of labor. And is it so certain that the interests of the race, even on secular grounds, may not require a special emphasis on some one side of human capabilities, either as being of more fundamental importance in character, or less likely to receive sufficient attention from individuals in the absence of a constant social or institutional pressure?

It was said some pages back that the only moral criterion explicitly acknowledged by Renan as guiding his personal valuations of right and wrong, in judgment and action, was the

standard of beauty. It would be misrepresenting his meaning, however, to suppose that he intended this criterion to serve universally, regardless of the characters and the ideals of the persons judging. For refined, impeccable natures of high moral culture, like himself, he indeed believed that the right would always coincide with the beautiful; but it is only when all have attained, as he believed all could attain, this same degree of moral perfection, that the beauty of an act can be a reliable criterion of its rightness. We saw into what opposite judgments he himself was led, notwithstanding his impeccability, by this standard. The truth is that the criterion of beauty is not one, but many; varying with the character, the ideals, the knowledge, the propensities and even the moods of the persons judging. Different acts seem beautiful to different persons, and to the same person at different times.

Nor did Renan see that the esthetic standard is at bottom only a sublimation of the hedonistic standard, just as truly as appreciation of beauty affords pleasure. If by pleasure is meant an agreeable state of consciousness,—and what else can it mean?—, then beauty is a species of pleasure, and ugliness a species of pain, in however refined a form. But this fact seems never to have occurred to Renan; for ethical hedonism is as violently antagonized in his earlier period as moral estheticism is enthusiastically championed. He expressly repudiates the idea that pleasure is the ultimate item of worth in life. If happiness were the highest aim of life, or even the only rational aim, there would be no difference, he argues, in respect of their destinies, between man and beast. *Mor. Crit.*, IV; A. S., 324-5.

He frequently insists on what has been called the paradox of hedonism, the fact that a conscious and exclusive pursuit of pleasure defeats its own aim. Pleasure-seeking, he assures the unsophisticated populace of Tréguier, is impolitic as well as immoral. The surest way of finding happiness is to stop looking for it. *Disc.*, 219. Cf. C. D'Angl., 222; *Souv.*, 127-8.

In later years his attitude towards hedonistic conceptions

of life were very radically changed, however, and much for the worse. But this decadent phase will call for further discussion in the next chapter.

It remains to observe in this place that another criterion of moral judgments, besides that of beauty, was in fact presupposed and implied in all his utterances on the subject: the standard of social utility, or social efficiency. In the *Abbesse de Jouarre*, for example, the most objectionable of his *Drames philosophiques*, he implies all along that acts are good or bad according as their consequences are socially advantageous or the reverse. The only reason why "free love" is judged to be wrong is because it is incompatible with the requirements of civilized life. This doctrine is clearly formulated in his *Avant-propos* to the play:

"Je m'imagine souvent que, si l'humanité acquérait la certitude que le monde dût finir dans deux ou trois jours, l'amour éclaterait de toutes parts avec une sorte de frénésie; car ce qui retient l'amour, ce sont les conditions absolument nécessaires que la conservation morale de la société humaine a imposées. Quand on se verrait en face d'une mort subite et certaine, la nature seule parlerait; le plus puissant de ses instincts, sans cesse bridé et contrarié, reprendrait ses droits; un cri s'échapperait de toutes les poitrines, quand on saurait qu'on peut approcher avec une entière légitimité de l'arbre entouré de tant d'anathèmes." Dr. Ph. 411. . . . Le monde boirait à pleine coupe et sans arrière-pensée un aphrodisiaque puissant qui le ferait mourir de plaisir. . . . On mourrait dans le sentiment de la plus haute adoration et dans l'acte de prière le plus parfait." Dr. Ph., 411-12. Cf. Dial., 133; F. Dét., 382-3.

For once, then, morality is dissociated completely from all metaphysical speculations or transcendental moral imperatives.

"J'espère que mon *Abbesse* plaira aux idéalistes," he says of this play "qui n'ont pas besoin de croire à l'existence d'esprits purs pour croire au devoir, et qui savent bien que la

noblesse morale ne dépend pas des opinions métaphysiques." Dr. Ph., 413.

And again:

"Le vrai, le beau, le bien ont par eux-mêmes assez d'attrait pour n'avoir pas besoin d'une autorité qui les commande, ni d'une récompense qui y soit attachée." Dr. Ph., 413.

Yet in the *Avenir de la science*, in his impassioned plea for the extension of science and its application to all departments of human life, he expressly repudiates a merely utilitarian basis for his plea, and incidentally declares that morality has a value in itself, independently of any advantage to society:

"C'est comme si, pour établir la morale, on se bornait à présenter les avantages qu'elle procure à la société. La science, aussi bien que la morale, a sa valeur en elle-même et indépendamment de tout résultat avantageux." A. S., 22.

All the reasons for morality dispersed throughout his writings, or nearly all, are run in together in the following prayer, with which he concludes his article *la Métaphysique et son avenir*.

"O Père céleste, j'ignore ce que Tu nous réserves. Cette foi, que Tu ne nous permets pas d'effacer de nos cœurs, est-elle une consolation que Tu as ménagée pour nous rendre supportable notre destinée fragile? Est-ce là une bienfaisante illusion que ta pitié a savamment combinée, ou bien un instinct profond, une révélation qui suffit à ceux qui en sont dignés? Est-ce le désespoir qui a raison, et la vérité serait-elle triste? Tu n'as pas voulu que ces doutes reçussent une claire réponse, afin que la foi au bien ne restât pas sans mérite, et que la vertu ne fût pas un calcul. Une claire révélation eût assimilé l'âme noble à l'âme vulgaire; l'évidence en pareille matière eût été une atteinte à notre liberté. C'est de nos dispositions intérieures que Tu as voulu faire dépendre notre foi. Dans tout ce qui est objet de science et de discussion rationnelle, Tu as livré la vérité aux plus ingénieux; dans l'ordre moral et religieux, Tu as jugé qu'elle devait appartenir aux meilleurs. Il eût été inique que le génie et l'esprit constituassent ici un privilège, et que les croyances qui doivent être le bien commun

de tous fussent le fruit d'un raisonnement plus ou moins bien conduit, de recherches plus ou moins favorisées." Frag., 333-4.

Before concluding this chapter, a word must be said about Renan's position on the much-mooted question of optimism versus pessimism:

It would seem that there is no place in his philosophy for a theodicy, inasmuch as in his speculations about the cosmos the relations of creator and creation are inverted. Instead of God in the beginning creating heaven and earth, the heavens and the earth are engaged through all time in the task of evolving a God. Nevertheless, Renan has attempted something like a justification of the ways of God to man.

In the semi-conscious groping of the deific process, he assures us, a certain amount of evil is the necessary price of a greater good. F. Dét., 377-8. Cf., Mor. Crit., 179.

Renan took every opportunity to testify that life is good, and decidedly worth living. Replying to the *Discours de réception* of M. Pasteur, before the *Académie Française*, 1882, he declares:

"Le coin imperceptible de la réalité que nous entrevoyons est plein de ravissantes harmonies, et la vie, telle qu'elle nous a été octroyée, est un don excellent et pour chacun de nous la révélation d'une bonté infinie. Disc., 81. Cf. *ibid.*, 207-8; 219.

"Grâce à la vertu, la Providence se justifie; le pessimisme ne peut citer que quelques cas bien rares d'êtres pour lesquels l'existence n'ait pas été un bien. Un dessein d'amour éclate dans l'univers; malgré ses immenses défauts, ce monde reste après tout une oeuvre de bonté infinie." Disc., 199-200.

In his own experience of life, he often declares, the good was unquestionably far in excess of the evil; and he confidently assumes that the same must be true of the lives of the vast majority of men.

"Je n'ai jamais beaucoup souffert," he writes in concluding his *Souvenirs*, ". . . . A moins que mes dernières années ne me réservent des peines bien cruelles, je n'aurai,

en disant adieu à la vie, qu'à remercier la cause de tout bien de la charmante promenade qu'il m'a été donné d'accomplir à travers la réalité." *Souv.*, 373-8.

Ten more years were reserved for Renan after writing these words, years full of toil and much physical pain; yet we find him reaffirming this same faith in the fundamental goodness of life, to the end of his days. His charming little speech before the *Félibres*, in June, 1891, the year before his death, and again at the *Fête de Bréhat*, in September of the same year, are among his latest direct confessions on the subject:

"Je garderai jusqu'à la fin la foi, la certitude, l'illusion, si l'on veut, que la vie est un fruit savoureux." *F. Dét.*, 124; *ibid.*, 109, 168.

The complete sincerity of these public professions is attested by the general tone and spirit of all his writings.

Side by side with his belief in the essential goodness of life, and proceeding from the same spirit, went his faith in the essential goodness of man. In his daily intercourse with people, he habitually assumed that he was dealing with honest men until he had proof of the contrary. It was impossible for him, he declares, to be unkind to anybody *a priori*.

"Un des principes fondamentaux de ma vie, principe auquel je m'attache obstinément, bien que plusieurs de mes amis me disent que c'est une énorme duperie, est de considérer comme un honnête homme toute créature humaine pour laquelle le contraire ne m'est pas démontré. . . . Je persiste à penser que si l'on tient compte des difficultés sans nombre de la condition humaine, la bienveillance générale est la vraie justice." *F. Dét.*, 194-5. *Cf. Souv.*, 374.

Remembering Renan's habit of espousing alternately both sides of any debatable question, in order to be sure not to exclude any part of the truth, it seems surprising that he should not occasionally have defended the pessimistic attitude also. But the fact seems to be that he never did. Is this because he was incapable by temperament of being impressed with the evil in life, the *Weltschmerz*, or is it because he deliberately resolved to ignore it? There is such a thing as temperamental

optimism, rendering its happy possessor impervious to the manifestations of cosmic evil.¹⁴

There are several passages in Renan's books, it is true, in which he seems at first glance to make open avowal of pessimism; and it would seem that on the strength of these statements some eminent critics, M. Faguet among them, have given him credit for a first-hand acquaintance with pessimism in his own person.

"Bien que parfois je sois tenté d'envier le don de ces natures heureuses, toujours et facilement satisfaites, j'avoue qu'à la réflexion, je me trouve fier de mon pessimisme, et que, si je le sentais s'amollir, le siècle restant le même, je rechercherais avidement quelle fibre s'est relâchée en mon cœur." *Mor. Crit.*, XII.

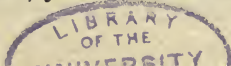
And again in his article on M. de Sacy:

"M. de Sacy est pessimiste, et il a bien raison. Il est des temps où l'optimisme fait involontairement soupçonner chez celui qui le professe quelque petitesse d'esprit ou quelque bassesse de cœur." *Mor. Crit.*, 20. Cf. *ibid.*, 21, 23; also Séailles, *El. R.*, 51.

But in these and similar passages, as a glance at the context will show, he is really using the word pessimism in a sense very different from that in which it would contradict his habitual professions of optimism. Adverse criticisms of a distasteful political and social régime, or gloomy forecasts of their probable future, if we call this pessimism at all, is yet a very different thing from the assertion that creation is a failure, or that life is essentially and inherently not worth living.

How profound and unshakable was Renan's faith in the fundamental goodness of life and of men, is unmistakably expressed even in his first book, and from the faith there proclaimed he never appreciably swerved:

"Peut-être nos affirmations à cet égard ont-elles un peu du mérite de la foi, qui croit sans avoir vu, et à vrai dire, quand on envisage les faits isolés, l'optimisme semble une générosité faite à Dieu en toute gratuité. Pour moi, je verrais l'humanité crouler sur ses fondements, je verrais les hommes s'égor-



ger dans une nuit fatale, que je proclamerais encore que la nature humaine est droite et faite pour le parfait, que les malentendus se lèveront, et qu'un jour viendra le règne de la raison et du parfait." A. S., 69.

In his article on Amiel, however, in 1884, he reluctantly admits the deplorable fact that for some few unfortunates, not to be were better than to be. But he holds that these unfortunate exceptions are very few, and arise not so much from the nature of things as from certain "*coincidences funestes*," which he hopes may some day be eliminated entirely. F. Dét., 388.

One way of eliminating these few outstanding exceptions, he suggests,—and there seems no reason to suppose that he is not in earnest—is to provide for all men the means of a painless, decent and voluntary exit from life, in the form of public euthanasial parlors, maintained by the State, and apparently placed at the disposal of all comers.

"J'ai toujours eu pour principe," says Prospero-Renan, who himself dies in this way, "qu'une vie disposée selon les règles d'une belle eurythmie ne doit pas laisser au hasard une pièce aussi importante que le dénouement. Tout est bonheur dans la vie, quand on peut à son gré disposer de la mort. . . . La vie n'est chose digne que quand on peut la finir à volonté." Dr. Ph., 228-9, 231.

"Que dites-vous!" exclaims his attendant, horrified. "Le suicide implique des idées repoussantes, une mare de sang, des souillures. La propreté l'interdit."

"Non, soyez tranquille, chère Brunissende," replies Prospero. "Je n'aurai que des sensations douces, et mes traits conserveront leur beauté. Mourir n'est rien. L'essentiel est de mourir avant le premier affaiblissement et d'éviter l'ennui d'être plaint." Ibid., 229.

"Viens donc, mon eau de mort, c'est ton heure! Cher tissu imprégné d'éther, qui possèdes dans tes plis le trésor de l'anesthésie, donne-moi le repos. Ah! je crois que tu seras en définitive mon invention la plus bienfaisante." Ibid., 234.

Then, gradually expiring under his euthanasial veil:

"Grâce à ce linceul, je meurs entier, et sans perdre aucune des sensations délicieuses qui sont d'ordinaire oblitérées chez le mourant par la douleur et l'affaiblissement. La coupe de la vie est délicieuse. Quelle sottise de s'indigner parce qu'on en voit le fond! C'est l'essence d'une coupe d'être épuisable."

And taking leave of his attendants:

"Dites qu'on joue les airs d'Amalfi et du golfe de Naples. Ayez soin que je ne voie pas un visage triste et que je n'entende pas un soupir.

"Être éternel et bon, merci pour l'existence. J'ai collaboré à toutes tes oeuvres, j'ai servi à toutes tes fins. Je te bénis! (Il s'endort en souriant. On lit sur sa figure les signes de jouissances infinies.)" Dr. Ph., 246-7. Cf. James, Var. Rel. Exp., 92.

Does Renan refuse to be held responsible for this revolting doctrine? Then here are the same ideas direct from his own pen:

"C'est comme si l'on repoussait une coupe de vin exquis parce qu'elle sera vite épuisée, un plaisir parce qu'il ne dure pas longtemps. . . . Reste la douleur, qui sûrement est chose odieuse, humiliante, nuisible aux fonctions nobles de la vie. L'homme peut la combattre, presque la supprimer, toujours s'y soustraire. Les cas où l'homme est rivé à la vie sont très rares. La seule destinée absolument condamnée est celle de l'animal esclave, du cheval par exemple, qui ne peut se suicider, ou bien celle des condamnés à mort, gardés à vue, ou de l'aliéné; mais ce sont là des situations bien exceptionnelles. L'immense majorité des individus n'a pas à se plaindre de son passage par l'être, puisque la balance de la vie se solde en joie et que la mort pourra sans doute un jour être rendue sans douleur."¹⁵ F. Dét., 384-5.

If life is a good, Renan argues, the world as a whole must be good; for the continuance of life alone is evidence that, for each species of creatures taken as a whole, the good must be in excess of the evil, else this species would cease to exist. And if there is a balance of good for each, there must be a balance of good for all.

"L'être, ou du moins la conscience, n'a commencé et ne continue dans le monde que parce qu'il y a dans l'être une plus-value de bien pour l'ensemble des individus conscients.

Un monde où le mal l'emporterait sur le bien serait un monde qui n'existerait pas, ou qui disparaîtrait." F. Dét., 387.

And again, in his *Examen de conscience philosophique*:

"De cette résultante suprême de l'univers total, nous ne pouvons dire qu'une seule chose, c'est qu'elle est bonne. Car si elle n'était pas bonne, l'univers total, qui existe depuis l'éternité, se serait détruit. Supposons une maison de banque existant depuis l'éternité. Si cette maison avait le moindre défaut dans ses bases, elle eût mille fois fait faillite."¹⁸ F. Dét. 427.

Renan had no patience with pessimists. The fundamental error of pessimism, he declares, consists in applying to the world as a whole an anthropocentric measure of worth, as if the totality of things had been planned for the exclusive convenience of man. F. Dét., 388-389.

But surely this again is a slip of the pen. It is impossible to suppose that Renan would seriously maintain that pessimists are specially prone to exaggerate the importance of man in the universe!

And besides, does not his reasoning hit the optimists quite as hard as the pessimists? If it is a mistake to call the world bad because it is not the best possible for man, by what right do we call it good in the opposite case? Yet this is precisely what he is himself continually doing.

The truth seems to lie somewhere between the two positions, or rather alternately with each of the disputants. Optimists and pessimists are both partly right and partly wrong. Assertions about the goodness or badness of the world, or of life in the world, are without meaning until the statements are reduced to concrete terms. The question must be whether life is good or bad for some particular individual, or group of individuals. For the world is both good and bad; good for some creatures and bad for others, good in some respects and bad in others. Whenever a given species of beings is in a prosperous and progressive

condition, we infer that, for this particular group, the good must predominate over the evil ("good" being taken in the sense of life-sustaining); and the reverse is true whenever a given species is on the way to extinction. The same reasoning applies to individuals. For them also, the world, in other words life in the world, is at once good and bad, to different individuals, at different times, and in different respects.

If this is true, it seems clear that anthropocentrism, or some other "centricism," is unavoidable in our judgments of good and bad, if our language is to be more than empty sound. Plain statements of fact, however encouraging or discouraging these may be, should never be termed either optimism or pessimism. These terms should be reserved, in the interests of clear thinking, for *exaggerations* of existing good and evil respectively.

Renan maintains, in conclusion, that the world, good as it is already, is growing better every day, thanks to the labors of man. On this point he never changed from the position affirmed in his youth:

"L'optimisme serait une erreur, si l'homme n'était point perfectible, s'il ne lui était donné d'améliorer par la science l'ordre établi. La formule: 'Tout est pour le mieux,' ne serait sans cela qu'une amère dérision. Oui, tout est pour le mieux, grâce à la raison humaine, capable de réformer les imperfections nécessaires du premier établissement des choses. Disons plutôt: tout sera pour le mieux, quand l'homme, ayant accompli son oeuvre légitime, aura rétabli l'harmonie dans le monde moral et se sera assujetti le monde physique." A. S., 31. Cf. *ibid.*, 69.

CHAPTER IV.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY.

The political and social philosophy of Renan is thoroughly permeated by his metaphysics, and suffers from the same capriciousness and unseizable vagueness. From transcendentalism in ethics, we pass to idealism in politics, not to say utopianism, as in the *Avenir de la science*.

He has somewhere declared himself unable to take seriously the philosopher who has never worked as a specialist over some problem in science. The philosopher might retort that Renan himself would have profited no less by a little of the discipline which philosophical system-building affords. The juxtaposition of his own divergent ideas on related subjects, had he himself undertaken the task, would probably have eliminated from his beautiful pages many a sophism which now, concealed by the charm of his magical phrase, glides by unnoticed; and perhaps nothing short of such a labor could have brought this poetic writer of classical prose to a proper regard for that sacred jewel of philosophical tradition, consistency. Cf. Séailles, *E. R.*, 213-14.

In his latest phase, thoroughly disillusioned in respect of all things human and divine, an all-indulging scepticism so far predominates in his writings as to be almost his normal point of view.

A few items, however, are constant in his ever-changing creed, and among these must be mentioned his unlimited faith in the possibilities of human reason in the field of positive science. ✓ The day will come, he insists, when reason, in spite of all that can be done to impede its progress, will truly govern the world, even the political world.

At the present day, to be sure, science and politics have little in common. Corr., p. 29. ✓ But an age of reason is coming, he prophesies in the *Avenir de la science*, even for politics. The last word of science, he insists, must be the scientific organization of humanity.

"Pour la politique, dit Herder, l'homme est un moyen; pour la morale, il est une fin. La révolution de l'avenir sera le triomphe de la morale sur la politique. *Organiser scientifiquement l'humanité*, tel est le dernier mot de la science moderne, telle est son audacieuse, mais légitime prétention." A. S., 37; repeated in Q. C., 334. Cf. preface to *L'Eau de jouvence*, Dr. Ph., 111.

In respect of his method in social philosophy, Renan belongs to the synthetic or historical school. He contends that the social sciences must be based on a study of the laws which have guided the development of society thus far. Q. C., 76.

In a lecture first delivered at the Sorbonne in 1882, and which has since become famous, Renan has given an elaborate definition of his idea of a nation. He begins by recalling the manifold forms which human association has taken in the past. There are those vague agglomerations of men after the manner of ancient Babylonia, China and Egypt; tribes like those of the Hebrews and Arabs; city states, like Athens and Sparta; unions of different countries, as in the Roman and Carolingian empires; communities without a country, held together by religious ties, like the Israelites and the Parsees. Then we have the different types of nations and confederations of the modern world: France, England, Germany, Switzerland and the United States; and finally there is that feeling of brotherhood and kinship established by community of race or language, uniting men into still larger groups, as when we speak of the Slavic or Germanic peoples. All these diverse forms of human association have actually existed, or still exist; are they all nations?

In regard to the ancient world, his answer is: obviously not. A nation, in the modern sense of the term, was unknown to antiquity. Egypt, China and ancient Chaldea were not nations;

they were masses or hordes, led by a supposed descendant of the sky. Egypt had no citizens, any more than has China today.

What, then, is it that constitutes a nation? Is it community of race? But in which of our modern nations is this to be found? The truth is that ethnographic considerations have had little or nothing to do with the formation of modern nations. France, for example, is Celtic, Iberian and Germanic; Germany is Germanic, Celtic and Slavic. In other nations, as in Italy, the ethnographic elements are still more complicated. It is impossible, in fact, to determine the race-element of a modern nation in the physiological sense of the term, for the zoological beginnings of humanity long antedate the origin of civilization and language.

And what is true of community of race applies equally, *mutatis mutandis*, to community of language and religion; neither of these is sufficient for the founding of a nation.

Is it community of commercial and industrial interests, then, that constitutes a nation? This also Renan denies; a *Zollverein* is not a *patrie*.

Nor is it the "natural frontiers," such as mountains or rivers, that determine the limits of a nation. In a word, neither race, nor language, nor community of interests, nor religious affinity, nor geographical conditions,—none of these is sufficient to found a nation.

A nation is a soul or spiritual principle, resulting from efforts and sacrifices made in the past. A heroic past: great men, great achievements,—this is the social capital upon which a national idea may be established. To have done great things together and be willing to do more; common souvenirs of a glorious past and a united will in the present; common sufferings, common joys, a common hope: these are bonds of union stronger than race, language or religion; these are the foundations of national existence. Cf. *Disc.*, 277ff.

"La patrie est un composé de corps et d'âmes. L'âme, ce sont les souvenirs, les usages, les légendes, les malheurs, les espérances, les regrets communs; le corps, c'est le sol, la race,

la langue, les montagnes, les fleuves, les productions caractéristiques." *C. d'Angl.*, 34.

"Dante, Pétrarque, les grands artistes de la renaissance ont été les vrais fondateurs de l'unité italienne. Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Herder, ont créé la patrie allemande." *Réf. Int.*, 138.

The idea that a nation is something more than the sum of its members appears already in the *Avenir de la science*, and is repeated in all his later works.

"La société n'est pas la réunion atomistique des individus, formée par la répétition de l'unité; elle est une unité constituée; elle est primitive." *A. S.*, 252.

"Aux yeux d'une philosophie éclairée, la société est un grand fait providentiel; elle est établie, non par l'homme, mais par la nature elle-même, afin qu'à la surface de notre planète se produise la vie intellectuelle et morale. L'homme isolé n'a jamais existé. La société humaine, mère de tout idéal, est le produit direct de la volonté suprême qui veut que le bien, le vrai, le beau, aient dans l'univers des contemplateurs." *Réf. Int.*, 241-2. *Cf. ibid.*, 302-3.

There is naturally not much in the writings of Renan with reference to the earlier forms of human association, or the manner in which the clan, the tribe or the nation develops. His only utterance on this point is that the family, and more particularly the monogamic family, is necessary to the formation of great races. *Dial.*, 35. This statement he often repeats. The conjugal fidelity of women which monogamy implies is the result, he declares, of long-continued cruelty to her sex in the remote past. Like all great things the family was founded by the most atrocious means; millions of women stoned to death paved the way to conjugal fidelity. *P. Isr.*, I: 5.

From the fact that society is an evolutionary and therefore non-rational product, and not the creation of some *contrat social*, combined with the fact that reason is acquiring an ever growing influence in political and social affairs, he appears to conclude that political progress is destined to do away with patriotism. Social progress, from his point of view, may be defined as a substitution of reason for tradition. With the

progress of reason, considerations of humanity will more and more prevail over those of country. Patriotism, therefore, being essentially a non-rational form of social cohesion, is certain to grow weaker as men grow more rational, and will ultimately disappear altogether;—a catastrophe, it may be added, which Renan would be the last to regret.

Renan has said many hard things against patriotism:

The fact is, he writes, that nation and philosophy have little to do with each other. Patriotism, among other meannesses, has the pretention of having a God of its own. *Jahveh élohénu*, said the Israelite; *unser Gott*, says the German. A nation is always egotistical. It desires that the God of heaven and earth should think of no other interests than its own. Under one name or another it creates for itself tutelary divinities. P. Isr., I:220.

Again in the Hibbert Lecture for 1880:

“Grande est la patrie, et saints sont les héros de Marathon et des Thermopyles. La patrie, cependant, n’est pas tout ici-bas. On est homme et fils de Dieu, avant d’être français ou allemand. Le royaume de Dieu, rêve éternel qu’on n’arrachera pas du cœur de l’homme, est la protestation contre ce que le patriotisme a de trop exclusif.” C. d’Angl., 37-8; also V. J., 123.

“Ma philosophie est l’idéalisme; où je vois le bien, le beau, le vrai, là est ma patrie.” Réf. Int., 177-8. Cf. Corr., Je. 14, 1853.

Similar declarations abound in his letters, especially those of the earlier period. Writing in 1849 to his friend Berthelot, he refers to an observation he has made among the French peasants: after only a single century of civilization, they are showing signs of decadence; and he consoles himself with the hope that the Slavic peoples, invading western Europe, may perhaps adopt its ideas and carry them forward with a new energy. Cf. Réf. Int., 192. It is only when the vanquished are superior in capacity and culture to their conquerors, he adds, that an appeal to nationality is justifiable. Corr., 37-9.

“Qu’importe par qui le bien se fait? Nous sommes main-

tenant pour les barbares contre les Romains. Il n'y a pas de décadence au point de vue de l'humanité."¹⁷ Corr., 39.

But though it is true that Renan made little of patriotism, especially in the ultra-rationalistic period of his earlier years; and though he treats it as a logical fallacy kept alive by prejudice, yet he felt it to be of the utmost importance, in the interests of national strength, that the fallacy should continue widely to prevail. For a long time to come, he declares, the existence of separate nationalities is necessary to the preservation of liberty, which would be lost if the world had but one law and one master. A confederation of the world involving the abolition of independent nationalities, even if possible, would not be desirable.

"La division est la condition de la liberté. Il dépendrait de quelqu'un de fondre les nations en une seule nation, les Églises en une seule Église, les sectes, les écoles, en une seule secte, en une seule école, qu'il faudrait s'y opposer. Le vieux monde romain a péri par l'unité, le salut du monde moderne sera sa diversité." Q. C., 352.

The same is affirmed of religions:

"Des trois grandes formes que le christianisme a prises dans nos sociétés, catholicisme, protestantisme, orthodoxie, en est-il une qui doit supprimer les deux autres? La puissance de la Russie fait l'avenir de l'orthodoxie, la race anglo-saxonne porte avec elle l'esprit du protestantisme sur tous les points du globe, le catholicisme a pour résister sa centralisation puissante et sa forte discipline. Réjouissons-nous de ces divisions irréductibles qui sont la garantie de la liberté." Nouv. Hist. Rel., 463.

Renan has been much criticised for his attitude towards democratic institutions.

M. Berthelot, who had a closer acquaintance with him than probably any one else, describes Renan's attitude towards democracy by comparing it with his own:

"Nos conceptions fondamentales étaient assez différentes. Si nous étions tous deux également dévoués à la science et à la libre pensée, Renan, en raison de ses origines bretonnes et de

son éducation ecclésiastique et contemplative, tournée vers le passé, avait moins de goût pour la démocratie, pour la Révolution française, et surtout pour cette transformation à la fois rationnelle, industrielle et socialiste, dans laquelle est engagée la civilisation moderne. Les anciennes manières d'envisager la protection des sciences, des lettres et des arts, par un pouvoir supérieur et autocratique, l'attiraient davantage: il n'en a jamais fait mystère." Corr., 2. Cf. Souv., XI, 335.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Renan was anti-democratic from the beginning, however. The contrary is the fact. The political and social ideas of his first book are democratic to the last degree. The revolution of 1848, coming soon after his withdrawal from the church, found him a young man of extremely radical tendencies, fired with a zeal for social as well as religious reform.¹⁸ Corr., 26-7; 35-6; Réf. Int., 14-15.

In his later writings, his attitude towards democracy is antagonistic enough, it is true. His *Réforme intellectuelle et morale*, written in 1870, is one long tirade against democratic institutions. The very source of democracy is condemned. Popular government, he declares, springs from a false and ignoble view of life, being based on envy and selfishness.

Another charge is that democracy is a cause of national weakness; a transgression, that is, of the first and greatest of Nature's commandments: be strong! Réf. Int., 49; 18; 29-30.

"La démocratie est le plus fort dissolvant de l'organisation militaire. L'organisation militaire est fondée sur la discipline; la démocratie est la négation de la discipline." Réf. Int., 54.

Moreover, democracy rests on a fallacious assumption of human equality. It is not true that all men are by nature free and equal; rather the proposition is absurd. Everyone knows that men are eminently unequal, in body, mind and character, and no human institution can change this fundamental fact. Nor is it possible for men to treat each other as though they were equal, to say nothing of the viola

tion of justice in doing so. Personal beauty, intellectual and physical vigor, a noble character, are intrinsically respectable, as their opposites are inherently despicable. No amount of revolutionary legislation can sweep away the distinctions between vice and virtue, beauty and ugliness, strength and weakness, honesty and dishonesty. Titles and privileges may be abolished, but those who really deserved them will be looked up to and bowed down to as much as before. A gentleman does not become the equal of *gavroche* by calling them both *citoyen*.

He calls attention to the superiority of Germany to France in this respect.

“Tandis que parmi nous un même type d’honneur est l’idéal de tous, en Allemagne, le noble, le bourgeois, le professeur, le paysan, l’ouvrier, ont leur formule particulière du devoir; les devoirs de l’homme, les droits de l’homme sont peu compris; et c’est là une grande force, car l’égalité est la plus grande cause d’affaiblissement politique et militaire qu’il y ait.” Réf. Int., 52-3; also p. 176.

“On supprime l’humanité, si l’on n’admet pas que des classes entières doivent vivre de la gloire et de la jouissance des autres.” Réf. Int., 246; 296.

But of all the absurdities of democracy, he declares, the most idiotic is the institution of universal suffrage. He could never forgive what he calls the unparalleled recklessness of the French statesmen of 1848 for conferring universal suffrage upon the country when it was not even called for. Réf. Int., 14-15.

His objections to the ballot-box have become platitudes. It affords no criterion of right policy, of true theory, or of wise and efficient administration. On the contrary, the appeal to the ballot-box is an appeal from knowledge to ignorance, and from civilization to barbarism. Furthermore, the masses are always exposed, by their love of flattery, to the evil designs and malpractices of the “peripatetic political practitioner.” Dr. Ph., 383. F. Dét., 171.

“La masse n’a droit de gouverner que si l’on suppose qu’elle sait mieux que personne ce qui est le meilleur. Le gouverne-

ment *représente* la raison, Dieu, si l'on veut, l'humanité dans le sens élevé (c'est à dire les hautes tendances de la nature humaine) mais non un chiffre. . . . Le suffrage universel n'est légitime que s'il peut hâter l'amélioration sociale. Un despote qui réaliserait cette amélioration contre la volonté du plus grand nombre serait parfaitement dans son droit." A. S., 349-50; Réf. Int., 47, 67-8; O. C., 302.

Nor is the ballot-box a test of strength even:

"En se proclamant *ultima ratio*, le suffrage universel part de cette idée que le plus grand nombre est un indice de force; il suppose que, si la minorité ne pliait pas devant l'opinion de la majorité, elle aurait toute chance d'être vaincue. Mais ce raisonnement n'est pas exact, car la minorité peut être plus énergique et plus versée dans le maniement des armes que la majorité." Réf. Int., 303.

Already in the *Avenir de la science* he suggests that the more direct method of actual battle is preferable to the counting of heads, since the truth is likely to be with those who are impelled by conviction to risk their own heads in defense of their claims. A. S., 344-5.

Besides, he asks, by what right can a majority, merely as such, claim the privilege of deciding a nation's destiny? The only justification of government is the good of humanity; but to realize this good is not necessarily the same thing as to obey the will of the greatest number. If therefore in a given instance the majority, whether from ignorance, prejudice or any other cause, are found to oppose the best interests of humanity, including their own, is it not right that they should be carried along by a wiser minority, even against their will? A. S., 429-30; cf. 340.

"Le bien de l'humanité étant la fin suprême, la minorité ne doit nullement se faire scrupule de mener contre son gré, s'il le faut, la majorité sotte ou égoïste. Mais pour cela il faut qu'elle ait raison. Sans cela, c'est une abominable tyrannie." A. S., 429.

A further charge against democracy is its unfitness to attain what he considers the principal *raison d'être* of national exist-

ence,—the production of great men. Nothing without great men, he exclaims; it is through great men that humanity will work out its salvation. *Dial.*, 103. But democracy, he insists, is doomed to mediocrity in all things. *Mor. Crit.*, 371-3.

With reference to methods of selecting national executives, he writes:

“Il est incontestable que, s’il fallait s’en tenir à un moyen de sélection unique, la naissance vaudrait mieux que l’élection. Le hasard de la naissance est moindre que le hasard du scrutin.” *Réf. Int.*, 45.

Last not least, democracy stands condemned by its own inherent instability. France committed suicide the day it beheaded its king. *Réf. Int.*, 8, 250-2.

It would be mistaking Renan’s meaning, however, to conclude that he intends by these charges to condemn constitutional government. Indeed, a truly constitutional government is just what democracy is incapable of producing, according to him. Considered historically, he says, constitutional government is not a creation of democracy. England, which instead of the absolute doctrine of popular sovereignty admits only the more moderate principle that there must be no government without the people, nor against the people, has been far better governed than France.

“L’Angleterre . . . s’est trouvée mille fois plus libre que la France, qui avait si fièrement planté le drapeau philosophique des droits de l’homme. C’est que la souveraineté du peuple ne fonde pas le gouvernement constitutionnel.” *Réf. Int.*, 240. Cf. *ibid.*, 43-5; *Dr. Ph.*, 85, 99.

In 1871 he writes in a letter to his friend Berthelot:

“La France s’est trompée sur la forme que peut prendre la conscience d’un peuple. Un tas de sable n’est pas une nation; or, le suffrage universel n’admet que le tas de sable. . . La civilisation a été de tout temps une œuvre aristocratique, maintenue par un petit nombre; l’âme d’une nation est chose aristocratique aussi: cette âme doit être guidée par un certain nombre de pasteurs officiels, formant la continuité de la nation.” *Corr.*, 395-6. *Réf. Int.*, 67, 147.

He explains that this "*pasteur officiel*" is not necessarily a dynasty. Leadership may be exercised by a senate, like that of ancient Rome, or of Venice; or better still by religious, social, educational or gymnastic institutions, like those of the Greek cities. But a thing that has never been seen, he insists, is a society without traditional institutions, a national education, or an accepted religion. Corr., p. 68.

The most sympathetic attitude which he has anywhere taken towards democracy occurs in his preface to the *Souvenirs*, pp. X-XX, where different forms of political organization are compared with regard to the influence they are likely to exert on the progress of reason, of which the first condition is declared to be freedom of thought and speech.

"Le but du monde est le développement de l'esprit, et la première condition du développement de l'esprit, c'est la liberté." Souv., XIII. Cf. Réf. Int., 99-100.

"Le monde marche vers une sorte d'américanisme, qui blesse nos idées raffinées, mais qui, une fois les crises de l'heure actuelle passées, pourra bien n'être pas plus mauvais que l'ancien régime pour la seule chose qui importe, c'est-à-dire l'affranchissement et le progrès de l'esprit humain." Souv., X-XI.

With reference to the *ancien régime*, he continues: Les concessions qu'il fallait faire à la cour, à la société, au clergé étaient pires que les petits désagréments que peut nous infliger la démocratie." Souv., XII.

But even these attenuations of his habitual bias are made reluctantly, and not without reserve. For a few pages forward in the same preface, contrasting democracy in France with its better organization in England and America, he says of the former:

"Je crois bien que, si les idées démocratiques venaient à triompher définitivement, la science et l'enseignement scientifique perdraient assez vite leurs modestes dotations. Il en faudrait faire son deuil." p. XVI-XVII. "*Noli me tangere* est tout ce qu'il faut demander à la démocratie."¹⁹ Ibid. XX. Cf. Dial., 77; Réf. Int., 218.

On the other hand, the praises which aristocracy gets from his pen are many and generous. All civilization is of aristocratic origin. Dr. Ph., 85. An aristocracy of the wise was the law of primitive man. Or. Lang., 25. It is by aristocracy that the inferior races have been disciplined, grammatical language created, that laws have been framed, and morality and reason developed. Dr. Ph., 99; Corr., 395. Even to-day its services to the State are incalculable. C. d'Angl., 122; also Réf. Int. 67, 244; Dial., 64-65. Séailles, 269-70.

"La vertu diminue ou augmente dans l'humanité selon que l'imperceptible aristocratie en qui réside le dépôt de la noblesse humaine trouve ou non une atmosphère pour vivre et se propager." Mor. Crit., 23. Cf. A. S. 319 ff.

This one-sided antagonism is all the more remarkable as it was characteristic of his method to advocate both sides of a question in turn, whenever it seemed fairly debatable. Can it be that he really had nothing to say in favor of democracy?

It is plain that his preference for aristocratic institutions is based on something more than an impartial examination of their comparative merits. An obvious criticism which his treatment of democracy provokes is that he condemns it in general terms, without considering the conditions in which it is placed (historical, geographical, ethnographical, political). If democracy is a failure in one country, that can prove nothing against its being a permanent success in another. The same nation, indeed, not only may but does need different forms of social and political organization at different stages in its development. It is of course impossible to decide questions as to the relative worth of political institutions one way or another in the form of general propositions, regardless of the special conditions under which these institutions are tested.

In the *Dialogues philosophiques*, half in jest and half in earnest, Renan describes an ideal social order, in which reason at last is the undisputed sovereign of the world. The progress of science, he suggests, may conceivably lead to the discovery of new forms of force, so hard to wield and so dangerous to manipulate that only a few superior minds would be capable of turn-

ing the same to practical use. In the hands of these intellectual giants, veritable gods as compared with even the choicest intellects of the present day, these hidden forces would be instruments of truly super-human power. The mass of mankind, lacking capacity for such knowledge, would be forced to submit. Dial., 82. The power which popular fancy ascribed to magicians of old would then become a reality. A select few would rule the many in virtue of mysterious influences which they alone understood. Such a government would be despotic, to be sure, but not therefore unjust; for he supposes these magicians to be as high above the average in virtue as in knowledge. It would be the beneficent tyranny of justice and truth. As soon as it was discovered that the power of these demi-gods was always in the service of the right, there would be no objection to its exercise; and very soon these heaven-born rulers would come to be loved, and their commands be accepted like irresistible natural laws. Dial., 112. In course of time, having discovered the secrets of matter and of life, they would rule over physical creation likewise, and eventually come to be worshipped as gods. "*Primos in orbe deos fecit timor.*" Dial., 113, Cf. Frag., 153 ff.

This is mere dreaming, of course; but it points in the direction of Renan's ideal of social organization. An enlightened despotism, not supposedly merely but truly enlightened, and despotic only in the sense of being all-powerful, was his *beau idéal* of political order. Cf. A. S., 350-2; Souv., 335.

But notwithstanding his strictures upon democracy, Renan was at all times an ardent advocate of personal liberty.

"Le régime libéral est une nécessité absolue," he writes, "pour toutes les nations modernes. Qui ne pourra s'y accommoder périra. . . . Une nation qui ne sera capable ni de la liberté de la presse, ni de la liberté de réunion, ni de la liberté politique, sera certainement dépassée et vaincue par les nations qui peuvent supporter de telles libertés. Ces dernières seront toujours mieux informées, plus instruites, plus sérieuses, mieux gouvernées." Réf. Int., 273.

"Le but suprême de l'humanité est la liberté des individus." M.-Aur., 588.

Many other passages of like tenor might be quoted from his books.

Conservatism, to be sure, is also indispensable. Radicalism and conservatism are the two weights, so to speak, by which society maintains its balance over the tight-ropes of destiny.

"La vie est le résultat d'un conflit entre deux forces contraires. On meurt aussi bien par l'absence de tout souffle révolutionnaire que par l'excès de la révolution." C. d'Angl., 100.

It is liberalism, however, that needs most encouragement, for of conservatism there is always an abundant supply. Liberalism itself becomes conservatism through mere lapse of time. The liberals of to-day are the conservatives of to-morrow. Dr. Ph., 269.

In a letter of 1847 to his friend Berthelot the relation of these opposite forces to social progress is clearly set forth:

"La loi, en politique, c'est de marcher toujours. L'opinion ne peut rester un instant stationnaire. . . Mais l'opinion marchant toujours et le gouvernement étant nécessairement stationnaire et conservateur, le lendemain de la révolution l'accord est rompu, et une nouvelle révolution est nécessaire. Elle ne se fera pas, et cela fort heureusement, parce que l'opposition n'a pas encore la force; cela arrivera plus tard, quand le désaccord sera trop criant; alors une nouvelle révolution, puis à recommencer. En un mot, j'imagine l'opinion comme avançant d'un mouvement continu et les gouvernements avançant par soubresauts, en sorte qu'ils ne peuvent que par instants se trouver de front." Corr., 26.

Renan was thoroughly modern in the distrust he showed for abstract "natural rights." A liberty which exists in fact as well as name is not the result of mere constitutional enactment. Civil liberty is not assured, he says, until it is rooted in institutions which have long endured. It might be shown that the only ground upon which a certain amount of independence still finds refuge in our time is a remnant of what

in France is known as the *ancien régime*. Mor. Crit., 335. The French revolution made the mistake of all revolutions which are founded on abstract ideas, instead of antecedent rights. Ibid., 98; also 37-8.

"La liberté achetée ou arrachée pied à pied a été plus durable que la liberté par nature. En croyant fonder le droit abstrait, on fondait la servitude, tandis que les hauts barons d'Angleterre, . . . en défendant leurs privilèges, ont fondé la vraie liberté." Mor. Crit., 39.

"L'Angleterre, sans rompre avec sa royauté, avec sa noblesse, avec ses comtés, avec ses communes, avec son Église, avec ses universités, a trouvé moyen d'être l'État le plus libre, le plus prospère et le plus patriote qu'il y ait."²⁰ Réf. Int., 5. Cf. *ibid.*, 239.

Foremost among civil liberties, in his estimation, are free thought and free speech. Without this personal freedom political liberty is the merest sham. Q. C., 411.

This seems to have been his normal point of view, though he did not hold to it consistently. In the *Avenir de la science*, for example, he defends the opposite view, insisting that free speech, like universal suffrage, cannot be reasonable until all men have acquired the capacity to distinguish between truth and error. The right freely to express one's thoughts presupposes a capacity to think aright, for there can be no such thing as a right to disseminate falsehood. A. S., 357. Cf. Mor. Crit., 161.

A far more urgent duty of society than the guarantee of universal free speech, he declares, is to improve the minds and characters of its members. So long as the masses are kept in ignorance, it is simply absurd to claim in their behalf the right to free assembly and free speech.

"Le vrai trouve toujours assez de liberté pour se faire jour, et la liberté ne peut être que préjudiciable, quand ce sont des insensés qui la réclament. . . . Nous usons la force pour conserver à tous le droit de radoter à leur aise; ne vaudrait-il pas mieux chercher à parler raison et enseigner à tous à parler et à comprendre ce langage? Fermer les clubs, ouvrez les

écoles, et vous servirez vraiment la cause populaire." A. S., 356. Also Q. C., 477. C. d'Angl., 26-7.

Legal guarantees of free speech he considered of little importance. A man who is really in the right is always sufficiently free to disseminate his convictions. In some respects, indeed, opposition to innovating ideas is a good thing. When would-be reformers are obliged to risk their own life in the advocacy of their cause, the peace will be disturbed only by those who are sure of their message. A. S., 362.

"La persécution a le grand avantage d'écarter la petite originalité qui cherche son profit dans une mesquine opposition.

. . . Autrefois, sur dix novateurs, neuf étaient violemment étouffés, aussi le dixième était bien vraiment et franchement original. La serpe qui émonde les rameaux faibles ne fait que donner aux autres plus de force. Aujourd'hui plus de serpe; mais aussi plus de sève. En somme, tout cela est assez indifférent, et l'humanité fera son chemin sans les libéraux et malgré les rétrogrades." A. S., 362.

"L'idée vraie ne demande pas de permission; elle se soucie peu que son droit soit ou non reconnu. Le christianisme n'a pas eu besoin de la liberté de la presse ni de la liberté de réunion pour conquérir le monde. . . . Occupons-nous donc un peu plus de penser, et un peu moins d'avoir le droit d'exprimer notre pensée. L'homme qui a raison est toujours assez libre." Q. C., 303-4

Moreover, the suppression of free-thought is, strictly speaking, impossible. A heretic placed on the rack may alter his language, but his private conviction is beyond the reach of external coercion. Even in the days when free-thinking meant reasoning that was not consistent with statements in the Bible, or the Coran, and people were burnt alive for professing their real beliefs, free-thinking was not in reality suppressed. All that philosophers needed to do was to twist their own language into harmony with the scriptures, or *vice versa*; in which case external coercion resulted merely in the multiplication of glossaries and commentaries. A. S., 58. What else are the intricate comments on knotty points in the scriptures but the pro-

test of reason against the enslaving letter of the text? And what is the cause of all the hermeneutical dodges and subterfuges of theological apologetics, both christian and pagan, save the rebellion of present knowledge against past ignorance?

"La liberté de penser est imprescriptible. . . Sous le régime d'Aristote, comme sous celui de la Bible, on a pu penser presque aussi librement que de nos jours, mais à la condition de prouver que telle pensée était réellement dans Aristote ou dans la Bible, ce qui ne faisait jamais grande difficulté. . . Tous les commentaires des livres sacrés se ressemblent, depuis ceux de Manou, jusqu'à ceux de la Bible, jusqu'à ceux du Coran. Tous sont la protestation de l'esprit humain contre la lettre asservissante. . . C'est la règle étroite que fait naître l'équivoque." A. S., 58-9. Cf. *ibid.*, 290.

So little did Renan make of the right to free speech at the most rationalistic period of his own life that even the inquisition itself, with all its cruelty, is condemned solely on the ground of not being in the service of truth. If the doctrine of the church had been true, he says, the inquisition would have been a beneficent institution. The moment a doctrine acquires universal acceptance and is made the foundation of social and national existence, society is right in punishing those who attempt to subvert it. A. S., 345-7.

"Du moment qu'une société entière accepte un dogme et proclame que ce dogme est la vérité absolue, et cela sans opposition, on est charitable en persécutant. C'est défendre la société." A. S., 345. Cf. *Mor. Crit.*, 161.

"Je conçois l'État reconnaissant un seul culte; je le conçois ne reconnaissant aucun culte; mais je ne le conçois pas reconnaissant tous les cultes. Il faut de la doctrine à l'humanité. Si le catholicisme est le vrai, les prétentions les plus extrêmes des ultramontains sont légitimes, l'Inquisition est une institution bienfaisante. . . De ce point de vue, . . le souverain fait acte de père en séparant le bon grain de l'ivraie et brûlant celle-ci. Rien ne tient devant la seule chose nécessaire, sauver les âmes." A. S., 348-9. Cf. *Souv.*, 112-13.

The needs of society, he repeatedly affirms, must in all cases

take precedence of individual rights. Whenever personal liberty comes in conflict with social welfare, it is the latter which ought to prevail. It is so, he believed, throughout nature. He goes so far as to declare that any curtailment of individual liberties is right, even to slavery itself, if the welfare of society demands it.^{20a}

The first and most imperative duty of any society, as of any individual, is the duty of self-preservation. Fighting-ability, he insists, is of the utmost importance to a nation's welfare. A society which is too kindly in disposition is weak. The world is not made up of perfect people; certain abuses, therefore, are necessary and unavoidable. It is dangerous for a nation to be more civilized than its neighbors. P. Isr., III, 230; Dr. Ph., 346.

A sound philosophy of life should fit men for killing as well as for dying. Dr. Ph., 349. The surest guarantee of peace is preparation for war.

Speaking of the *régime* under which the happiness of the individual, guaranteed by the social group to which he belongs, is the sole object of the law: "Who will maintain this fine ideal?" he asks; "who will protect this little paradise of brothers against the attacks of external force?" P. Isr., III: 354.

"C'est une vérité bien constatée que le progrès philosophique des lois ne répond pas toujours à un progrès dans la force de l'État. La guerre est chose brutale; elle veut des brutaux; souvent il arrive ainsi que les améliorations morales et sociales entraînent un affaiblissement militaire." M.-Aur., 253-4.

He reminds his readers that war is a legacy from uncivilized times, a relic of primitive barbarism. M.-Aur., 253. Militarism therefore, appealing as it does to instincts deep-rooted in human nature, cannot be suddenly abolished by mere resolutions; nor the cannon be safely discarded by any single nation alone. He believed that peoples, far more than individuals even, are compelled to be selfish by the very conditions of existence. P. Isr., I: 219. The way to certain national death is persistence in a policy of unselfish humanitar-

ianism. A nation that labors for humanity is always a victim of the universal work which it accomplishes. P. Isr., III: 224; XII. A nation which devotes itself to social and religious problems, courts its own ruin. C. d'Angl., 106.

This is one of his oft-repeated inductions from history. In the Hibbert lecture for 1880, he writes:

"Presque toujours les nations créées pour jouer un rôle de civilisation universelle, comme la Judée, la Grèce, l'Italie de la renaissance, n'exercent leur pleine action sur le monde qu'après avoir été victimes de leur propre grandeur. . . Les peuples doivent choisir, en effet, entre les destinées longues, tranquilles et obscures, de celui qui vit pour soi, et la carrière troublée, orageuse, de celui qui vit pour l'humanité. La nation qui agit dans son sein des problèmes sociaux et religieux est presque toujours faible politiquement. Tout pays qui rêve un royaume de Dieu, qui vit pour les idées générales, qui poursuit une oeuvre d'intérêt universel, sacrifie par là même sa destinée particulière, affaiblit et détruit son rôle comme patrie terrestre. On ne porte jamais impunément le feu en soi." C. d'Angl., 103-4. Rêf. Int., 236; Q. C., XXVIII.

Renan had little sympathy, on the whole, with socialism, as a project for the re-organization of society on a basis of equal rights for all men. Not that he was blind to the manifold injustice of the present social *régime*, or felt no sympathy with the undeserved sufferings of the less fortunate classes. The reverse is the truth. Nor would he deny that socialism is a well-grounded protest against the present *régime*. His want of sympathy with the movement appears rather to have sprung from a conviction that, at bottom, the wrongs for which socialists are seeking a remedy are beyond the power of man to remove, being inherent in the nature of things.

He was much impressed with the analogy of socialism to early Christianity. The two movements appeared to him to spring from a common source: the evils and sufferings and general unsatisfactoriness of average human life in this world. The great consolation of man, he says with reference to the

New Jerusalem, in the presence of the incurable evils of society, is to imagine an ideal city, from which he excludes every sorrow and which he endows with every perfection. P. Isr., III: 400.

He notes a fundamental difference, however, amounting to contrast, in their respective conceptions of the possibilities of human nature. In the christian economy the reign of justice, impossible on earth because the "prince of this world" is the "prince of darkness," is deferred to another life and constitutes the reward of those who are worthy to enter the heavenly city. Socialism, on the other hand, with its different conception of nature and of man's place in nature, also less certain of man's future and with more faith in his present, hopes to establish its New Jerusalem on this planet. In a word, socialism is Christianity modernized and secularized. Christianity is socialism minus its faith in man; socialism is Christianity minus its faith in God.

The parallelism of the two extends to details. Like Christianity, socialism is international in its sympathies and aspirations, which is a serious matter, considering that socialism is a live issue in politics.

Socialism again, with its phalansteries, communities, unions, orders, and brotherhoods, tends, like Christianity, to create separate allegiances within the state, in rivalry with patriotism.

All religious orders, he writes, are in the same position. If socialism could attain any organization, its phalansteries, groups, syndicates, would exist in the state, like small egoisms caring very little for public interests. . . . Ideal Jerusalems bring misfortune. P. Isr., III: 355. Cf. V. J., 172.

Above nationalities there is, in fact, an eternal ideal. Socialism, according to the Israelite and Christian dream, will probably one day kill the patriots, and make a reality of the words read in the service for the dead: *Judicare seculum per ignem*. P. Isr., III: 386.

Socialism, moreover, is unmilitary in spirit and policy,—a further trait of resemblance with early Christianity.

"Il est clair que le socialisme des ouvriers est l'antipode de l'esprit militaire; c'est presque la négation de la patrie; les doctrines de l'Internationale sont là pour le prouver." Réf. Int., 23.

But if socialism and Christianity are so nearly related, it may be asked, how comes it that the church is commonly regarded by socialists as one of their very worst enemies? Should we not expect that so far as they are pursuing common aims, such as the extension of human brotherhood, Christianity and socialism would reinforce each other?

Renan admits that in some respects Christianity is a formidable barrier to socialism. It is, in fact, at once an obstacle and a reinforcement; a reinforcement through its doctrine of universal brotherhood, and an obstacle through its doctrine of the future life. The Christian who really tries to love his neighbor as himself and to do unto others as he would that they should do unto him, is so far a socialist. But on the other hand, so far as the disciple of Jesus loves not the world nor the things that are in the world, and considers life on earth as a pilgrimage to his heavenly home; so far as, concerned only to lay up treasures in heaven, he despises earthly riches and, embracing poverty, welcomes suffering and sorrow as a discipline to fit him for the kingdom of God: in so far his religion is the very opposite of socialism. Imagine Simeon Stylites heading a procession for a fairer distribution of the comforts and pleasures of life!

Already in his first book Renan calls attention to the fact that an excessive regard for the life to come is an obstacle to social reform.

"Quand on pense que toute chose se trouvera là-haut rétablie, ce n'est plus tant la peine de poursuivre l'ordre et l'équité ici-bas. Notre principe, à nous, c'est qu'il faut régler la vie présente comme si la vie future n'existait pas, qu'il n'est jamais permis pour justifier un état ou un acte social de s'en référer à l'au-delà. En appeler incessamment à la vie future, c'est endormir l'esprit de réforme, c'est ralentir le zèle pour l'organisation rationnelle de l'humanité." A. S., 331-2.

Cf. P. Isr., III: 208. He is especially indignant against those who feign a belief in the hereafter because they imagine this to be in the interests of social order:

“Quand un sceptique prêche au pauvre le dogme consolateur de l’immortalité, afin de le faire tenir tranquille, cela doit s’appeler une escroquerie; c’est payer en billets qu’on sait faux, c’est détourner le simple par une chimère de la poursuite du réel.” A. S., 331.

That this side of religion is unfavorable to social reform is further shown, according to Renan, by the fact that contemporary socialism finds its very tap-root in the wide-spread disbelief in a future life. The reason the masses are insisting so energetically on a fairer distribution of the good things of life is because they have ceased to believe that one can merit heaven by making earth a hell.

“C’est fatalement que l’humanité cultivée a brisé le joug des anciennes croyances; . . . est-ce sa faute? Peut-on croire ce que l’on veut? Il n’y a rien de plus fatal que la raison. Cf. Souv., 383. C’est fatalement . . . que le peuple est devenu à son tour incrédule. . . C’est fatalement enfin que le peuple incrédule s’est élevé contre ses maîtres en incrédulité et leur a dit: Donnez-moi une part ici-bas, puisque vous m’enlevez la part du ciel. . . Maintenir une portion de l’humanité dans la brutalité, est immoral et dangereux; lui rendre la chaîne des anciennes croyances religieuses, qui la moralisaient suffisamment, est impossible. Il reste donc un seul parti, c’est d’élargir la grande famille, de donner place à tous au banquet de la lumière.” A. S., 333-4.

This view of the question is repeated in all his later works.

“Il faut augmenter la somme de bonheur de la vie humaine,” he says in his article on Amiel. “Ce n’est pas de péché, d’expiation, de rédemption qu’il faut désormais parler à l’homme; c’est de bonté, de gaieté, d’indulgence, de bonne humeur, de résignation. A mesure que les espérances d’outre-tombe disparaissent, il faut habituer les êtres passagers à regarder la vie comme supportable; sans cela ils se révolteront. On ne maintiendra plus l’homme en repos que par le bonheur.

. . . Le pessimisme et le nihilisme ont pour cause l'ennui d'une vie qui, par suite d'une organisation sociale défectueuse, ne vaut pas la peine d'être vécue. La vie ne vaut que par ses fruits; si l'on désire que l'homme y tienne, il faut la rendre savoureuse et délectable à mener." F. Dét., 381-2.

Renan is sometimes accused of an absence of sympathy with the lower classes, and it must be admitted that his habitual attitude towards certain questions of social policy, his apparent indifference to social reforms, his dislike of the ballot-box and general distrust of democracy, lend countenance to the charge. But the accusation is false, nevertheless. Nobody familiar with his writings, especially those of the earlier period, can doubt for a moment that his sympathy with the poor was genuine and deep.

"S'il était vrai que l'humanité fût constituée de telle sorte qu'il n'y eût rien à faire pour le bien général, s'il était vrai que la politique consistât à étouffer le cri des malheureux et à se croiser les bras sur des maux irrémédiables, rien ne pourrait décider les belles âmes à supporter la vie. Si le monde était fait comme cela, il faudrait maudire Dieu et puis se suicider." A. S., 325. Cf. *ibid.*, 319-329; also *Souv.*, 148; 349-50; *Dr. Ph.*, 173-6.

And again in a later work:

"Quand on a charge d'âmes, il faut donc s'exprimer avec assez de réserve pour que, dans l'hypothèse de la grande banqueroute, ceux qu'on y a compromis se trouvent n'avoir pas été trop victimes." F. Dét., 395-6.

Renan's apparent hostility to political and social reforms in reality reflects his indifference to material interests and pre-occupations as such; and from a passage in the *Souvenirs* it appears that his attitude was due to impressions received in early youth. That spirit of unworldly idealism which he caught from his earliest teachers, the priests of Tréguier College, while it heightened his sympathy for the poor, inspired distaste for the vulgar methods and selfish motives of secular affairs. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that he alone in his century has rightly understood Jesus and St. Francis,—a slip

of the pen for which he has often been censured by his numerous critics. Cf. *Souv.*, 148; also 11, 135, 140.

It is interesting to compare the epicureanism of his old age, with the stoicism of his youth. In his earlier books he is always insisting that nobody has a right to enjoyment; for the end of society is not the happiness of its members, but the greatest attainable moral and intellectual perfection of all. A. S. 378, 421, 386; *Hist. Rel.*, 393.

"Le but de l'humanité n'est pas le repos; c'est la perfection intellectuelle et morale. Il s'agit bien de se reposer, grand Dieu! quand on a l'infini à parcourir et le parfait à atteindre! L'humanité ne se reposera que dans le parfait." Q. C., 306 Cf. *ibid.*, 49. For Renan's conception of human perfection, see A. S., 12, 355, 376, 387.

"La devise des saint-simoniens: "Sanctifiez-vous par le plaisir," est abominable; c'est le pur gnosticisme. Celle du christianisme: "Sanctifiez-vous en vous abstenant du plaisir," est encore imparfaite. Nous disons, nous autres spiritualistes: "Sanctifiez-vous et le plaisir deviendra pour vous insignifiant, et vous ne songerez pas au plaisir." La sainteté, c'est de vivre de l'esprit, non du corps." A. S., 404.

As pleasure-seeking is destructive of all that is best in the individual, so is it the bane of nations. A people that gives itself up to frivolity and ease is doomed to certain decadence. Socialism is expressly condemned on the ground that it springs from a false, hedonistic conception of life.

If socialism ever becomes an established fact, he declares, it must sooner or later lead to national decay. The pinch of necessity is the mother of all effort. All progress comes from the hope of doing better or avoiding worse. A. S., 373; also note 158.

"Si l'idéal du bien-être matérialiste que rêvent quelques réformateurs venait à se réaliser, le monde, privé de l'aiguillon de la souffrance, perdrait un des moyens qui ont le plus contribué à faire de l'homme un être intelligent et moral." *Mor. Crit.*, 18. Cf. A. S., 421-2, 429; *Réf Int.*, 111.

"L'erreur commune des socialistes et de leurs adversaires est

de supposer que la question de l'humanité est une question de bien-être et de jouissance. Si cela était, Fourier et Cabet auraient parfaitement raison . . . S'il ne s'agissait que de jouir, mieux vaudrait pour tous le brouet noir que pour les unes les délices, pour les autres la faim." A. S., 377-8; also 431-2.

"Malheur à la génération . . . qui a congu la vie comme un repos et l'art comme une jouissance! Les grandes choses n'apparaissent jamais dans ces tièdes milieux." A. S., 421.

Even war itself acquires a redeeming feature from its conducting to a strenuous life:

"Le jour où l'humanité deviendrait un grand empire romain pacifié et n'ayant plus d'ennemis extérieurs, serait le jour où la moralité et l'intelligence courraient les plus grands dangers." Réf. Int., 111. Cf. *ibid.*, 40; also A. S., IX; Dial., 23.

"Il faut donc s'y résigner: les belles choses naissent dans les larmes; ce n'est pas acheter trop chère la beauté que de l'acheter au prix de la douleur." A. S., 426. Cf., Q. C., 466-7.

Now turn to the gospel which prevails in his writings half a century later:

"La plus dangereuse erreur, en fait de morale sociale, est la suppression systématique du plaisir." F. Dét., 383.

"Moraliser les masses!" exclaims Prospero-Renan. A notre âge, peut-on dire de pareils enfantillages? Si nous ne sommes pas désabusés, quand le serons-nous, mon cher? . . . La moralité doit être réservée pour ceux qui ont une mission comme nous . . . Mais les pauvres gens, les gens ordinaires, allez donc! Ils sont pauvres, et vous voulez que, par-dessus le marché, ils soient vertueux! C'est trop exiger. . . . Si l'homme n'existait pas, les formes les plus élevées de l'adoration sur notre planète eussent été les jeux des dauphins, le tourbillonnement folâtre des papillons, le chant des oiseaux." Dr. Ph., 170-2.

"Le peuple doit s'amuser; c'est là sa grande compensation. Un peuple gai est le meilleur des peuples. Ce qu'un peuple donne à la gaieté, il le prend presque toujours sur la méchanceté."

As for expecting the masses to be temperate in drink:

“Mais c’est là une véritable indignité. Priver les simples gens de la seule joie qu’ils ont, en leur promettant un paradis qu’ils n’auront pas! . . . Allons donc! Pauvres vies déflorées! . . . Pourquoi voulez-vous empêcher ces malheureux de se plonger un moment dans l’idéal? Ce sont peut-être les heures où ils valent quelque chose.”²¹ Dr. Ph., 172-3.

It must be admitted that Renan’s later writings have contributed not a little to render public opinion in France as indulgent as possible in matters of sexual immorality. He seems to have grown more and more lax in his speech as he grew older; though not, of course, in his personal life.²² He apparently had lost all faith in the very possibility of effecting any considerable permanent improvement in the economic condition of the mass of mankind. Equality, even the more modest claim to equality of opportunity, he had come to consider an unrealisable dream. In his earlier period he enthusiastically hoped that all men might be lifted to a level of culture where the coarser pleasures would be too repulsive to bring satisfaction to a human soul. But in these ideals he now believed no longer. In his later position he reasoned like this: If life is a good only in proportion to its surplus of pleasures over pains, why should not the masses, these “pauvres vies déflorées,” be allowed to indulge those forms of amusement by which alone they are reconciled to the hardships of their brutal existence?

But this is plainly a gospel of decadence, individual and national. It overlooks the all-important fact that pleasure-seeking, like any other degrading habit, must grow by what it feeds on. The more this conception of life is allowed to gain prevalence, the more animalistic and bestial must men become. Remove the restraints and supports of a healthy public opinion, and who shall predict at what point in the decalogue the downward drift will come to a stop?

But perhaps we should judge his later effusions in the light of the following warning, with which he concludes his *Souvenirs*:

“Je proteste d’avance contre les faiblesses qu’un cerveau

ramolli pourrait me faire dire ou signer. C'est Renan sain d'esprit et de coeur, comme je le suis aujourd'hui, ce n'est pas Renan à moitié détruit par la mort et n'étant plus lui-même, comme je le serai si je me décompose lentement, que je veux qu'on croie et qu'on écoute. Je renie les blasphèmes que les défaillances de la dernière heure pourraient me faire prononcer contre l'Éternel." Souv., 377.

His habitual attitude in later years towards social and political questions is well expressed in a New Year's message to his friend M. Berthelot, then prime minister of his country. It reveals again the capital defect of all his later philosophy: the inveterate habit of contemplating all things, even morality itself, *sub specie aeternitatis*.

"Les accidents les plus graves des choses humaines, quand on se place au point de vue de la terre entière, n'ont pas plus d'importance que le mouvement d'un guêpier ou le va-et-vient d'une fourmilière. Quand on se place au point de vue du système solaire, nos révolutions ont à peine l'amplitude de mouvements d'atomes. Du point de vue de Sirius, c'est moins encore. Du point de vue de l'infini, ce n'est rien. Ce point de vue est le seul d'où l'on juge bien les choses dans leurs vérité."^{22a} F. Dét., 156-7. Cf. A. S., 330.

Renan has somewhere argued that belief in a future life tends to make people indifferent to the bettering of the conditions of life in this world, and this may perhaps be true in some cases. But if any lesson is taught by the example of his own life, it is this that the most universal disillusionment may lead to at least an equal indifference; and indeed he himself has affirmed this in so many words:

"To have recognized that human affairs are an approximation without earnestness and without precision is a great result in philosophy, but involves the abdication of every active rôle. The future lies in the hands of those who are not undeceived. Woe to those of whom Saint Paul speaks: *qui spem non habent!* P. Isr., III, 404. Cf. James, Var. Rel. Exp., 265.

CHAPTER V.

CRITICAL SUMMARY OF RESULTS.

The reader who has followed the exposition in the preceding pages, especially the numerous quotations from Renan himself, can hardly help feeling that his philosophical speculations, when stripped of the charm they derive from the beautiful language in which they invariably are clothed, are too often characterized either by unprofitable vagueness or fundamental incoherence; that his conclusions are either so indefinite as to accord with almost any view of the question under discussion, or so hopelessly inconsistent as to lead to no positive results.

And this is the truth. Andrew Lang was quite right when he wrote:

"Renan has no fixed theory of philosophy. . . . ; he is Jeckyl and he is also Hyde; he is Pulvis and he is Umbra; he is Indra and he is the sacrifice on the altar of Indra; he is Jean qui pleure and he is Jean qui rit; he is Democritus and he is Heraclitus." *Fort. Rev.*, vol., 47. Cf. Séailles, *E. R.*, 293.

Renan's characterization of the philosophy of Plato, in fact, applies equally well to his own:

"Platon n'a pas de symbole, pas de propositions arrêtées, . . . dans le sens scolastique que nous attachons à ce mot; c'est fausser sa pensée que de vouloir en extraire une théorie dogmatique. Et pourtant, Platon représente un esprit; Platon est une religion." *A. S.*, 54. Cf. *ibid.*, 446-7.

These words are true of himself. Renan, like Plato, represents an *esprit*, a philosophy, a religion if you will.

He sometimes writes, as if this *esprit*, this personal note, this religion, were the whole of philosophy, or at least its chief characteristic. He expressly defines philosophy as a species of poetry:

"De la poésie à la critique, il n'y a pas si loin qu'on le suppose; les races poétiques sont les races philosophiques, et la philosophie n'est au fond qu'une manière le poésie comme une autre." *Mor. Cr.*, 455.

"Un système, c'est une épopée sur les choses. Il serait aussi absurde qu'un système renfermât le dernier mot de la réalité qu'il le serait qu'une épopée épuisât le cercle entier de la beauté. *A. S.*, 57 *Cf. P. Sém.*, 40.

And again in his article *l'Avenir de la métaphysique*:

La philosophie est moins une science qu'un côté de toutes les sciences . . . La plus humble comme la plus sublime intelligence a eu sa façon de concevoir le monde; chaque tête pensante a été à sa guise le miroir de l'univers; chaque être vivant a eu son rêve qui l'a charmé, élevé, consolé: grandiose ou mesquin, plat ou sublime, ce rêve a été sa philosophie." *Frag.*, 286-7.

There would thus be as many different philosophies as different personalities; and indeed, he says this in so many words:

"La philosophie, c'est l'homme même; chacun naît avec sa philosophie comme avec son style." *Frag.*, 288.

Only a few pages earlier, however, in the same article, philosophy is described in a manner quite incompatible with this view, being practically identified with positive science:

"Les vrais philosophes se sont faits philologues, chimistes, physiologistes . . . Aux vieilles tentatives d'explication universelle se sont substituées des séries de patientes investigations sur la nature et l'histoire. La philosophie semble ainsi aspirer à redevenir ce qu'elle était à l'origine, la science universelle." *Frag.*, 265. The same idea, *A. S.*, 301.

But two-sided statements from Renan, or even many-sided ones, no longer surprise us. We have learned to regard them as an essential part of his philosophical method, not to say its leading characteristic. He seems to have really believed and practiced, what in his later period he so often preached, that in philosophy and religion, the only way to make sure of being right sometimes, is to affirm in turn all the alternatives. *Dr. Ph.* 256. *Cf. James, Hum. Im.*, 12, 16.

A complete explanation of Renan's heterogeneous personality, and the numerous contradictions in his writings to which it led, is of course not attempted in this chapter. All that can be accomplished here is to indicate the direction in which, as the writer believes, a more exhaustive study of the subject must turn.²³

Perhaps we may best begin by examining first the explanations he himself has offered.

In his *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse*, he tries to account for what he is pleased to call his apparent contradictions, by tracing them back to a certain dualism in his character, which in turn is variously ascribed, now to an atavistic influence of his complex descent, and again to a later disillusionment.

"Par ma race," he says, "j'étais partagé, et comme écartelé, entre des forces contraires . . . Cette complexité d'origine est en grande partie, je crois, la cause de mes apparentes contradictions. Je suis double; quelquefois une partie de moi rit quand l'autre pleure." *Souv.*, 141-5; 73, 90.

But a few pages earlier in the same book we find this dualism attributed to a later disenchantment, due to a wider knowledge of men and a deeper insight into the ways and the needs of the world. His native idealism, he tells us, seemed to him out of place in a world such as ours, and this discovery led him to apply a double standard of worth in his judgments of men and things;

. . . "de prendre pour mes jugements pratiques le contrepied exact de mes jugements théoriques, de ne regarder comme possible que ce qui contredisait mes aspirations." *Souv.*, 123.

"Alors s'établit en moi une lutte ou plutôt une dualité qui a été le secret de toutes mes opinions . . . Je vis que l'idéal et la réalité n'ont rien à faire ensemble; que le monde, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, est voué sans appel à la platitude, à la médiocrité; que la cause qui plaît aux âmes bien nées est sûre d'être vaincue; que ce qui est vrai en littérature, en poésie, aux yeux des gens raffinés, est toujours faux dans le monde grossier des faits accomplis." *Souv.*, 122; 123-4.

Still another explanation is suggested in his preface to the

same book, where opposite tendencies and temperaments within the same personality are explained as a case of opposite poles attracting each other.

"Presque tous nous sommes doubles. Plus l'homme se développe par la tête, plus il rêve le pôle contraire, c'est à dire l'irrationnel, le repos dans la complète ignorance, la femme qui n'est que femme, l'être instinctif qui n'agit que par l'impulsion d'une conscience obscure." *Souv.*, VII-VIII; Cf., *F. Dét.*, 39.

Comparing these explanations with one another, it seems at first glance that Renan has fallen merely into new contradictions in attempting to explain the old ones. But it is quite probable that his explanations are all of them true as far as they go; heredity, experience, the attraction of opposites, have doubtless all co-operated in the total result.

It is easy to present these contradictions in such a way as to insinuate that Renan was incapable of close reasoning, or a stranger to sound scientific methods; and to assume that his contradictions are merely the result of flippant levity or self-satisfied superficiality. But such a procedure is too absurd, and reveals a total misapprehension of the nature of his contradictions, as well as of his true character.

Two prime factors seem to lie at the root of all his contradictions: sincerity and progressiveness. A more unfeigned sincerity there never was, either in seeking the truth or in stating it. In Renan's own explanations, ascribing these contradictions to a kind of double personality, this ultimate trait, sincerity, is taken for granted; but it has to be made explicit if the explanation is to be complete.

It is quite possible, of course, for contradictory impulses and opposite points of view to exist together within the same personality, without appearing in speech and conduct; and it is only because in Renan's case these opposite promptings were all expressed with an equal freedom and frequency that his double personality gave rise to that systematic two-sidedness which uninitiated readers of Renan find so bewildering. Whatever seemed to him to be true, in different moods and from different points of view, he frankly and fully expressed, quite regard-

less of consistency with other moods or other points of view. His own testimony on this question will not be disputed by any one familiar with his works.

"Dans mes écrits, j'ai été d'une sincérité absolue. Non seulement je n'ai rien dit que ce que je pense; chose bien plus rare et plus difficile, j'ai dit tout ce que je pense." *Souv.*, 151.

"Le public m'a eu autant que mes amis. . . . Il m'est arrivé fréquemment, en écrivant une lettre, de m'arrêter pour tourner en propos général les idées qui me venaient. Je n'ai existé pleinement que pour le public. Il a eu tout de moi; il n'aura après ma mort aucune surprise; je n'ai rien réservé pour personne." *Souv.*, 365.

And few indeed are those who have had a wider range of thoughts and feelings, of facts and fancies to express. His life has been compared to a voyage through the realm of ideas and sentiments.

"Il avait connu l'état d'âme religieux, l'état d'âme scientifique, un état d'âme où science et religion co-existaient sans s'exclure; il connut l'état d'âme optimiste, l'état d'âme pessimiste, la hautaine ironie et l'indulgence indéfinie, la résignation et le sarcasme, l'élévation religieuse et le persiflage Voltairien, tous les modes en quelque sorte, de pensée et même de croyance, donnant à chacune une expression si vive qu'on eût pu croire à chaque fois, que c'était le seul qu'il entendît et pratiquât." *M. Faguet, Rev. Par., Vol. 4, p. 119.*

"By his mastery of Eastern and Oriental languages and literatures," says Mr. Conway, "he had familiarly dwelt among primitive tribes, with them set up their dolmens, knelt at their altars, travelled with their migrations in India, Persia, Egypt, Syria, shared their pilgrimages from lower to higher beliefs, had listened to their prophets, visited the home of Mary and Joseph, walked with the disciples." *Monist*, vol. 3, pp. 201 ff. Cf. *Monod, Renan, etc.*, p. 40, 48.

"Pour moi," says Théoctiste-Renan, "je goûte tout l'univers par cette sorte de sentiment général qu'il fait que nous sommes tristes en une ville triste, gais en une ville gaie. Je jouis ainsi des voluptés du voluptueux, des débauches du débauché, de la

mondanité du mondain, de la sainteté de l'homme vertueux, des méditations du savant, de l'austérité de l'ascète. Par une sorte de sympathie douce, je me figure que je suis leur conscience. Les découvertes du savant sont mon bien; les triomphes de l'ambitieux me sont une fête. Je serais fâché que quelque chose manquât au monde; car j'ai conscience de tout ce qu'il enferme." Dial., 133-4. Cf., *ibid.*, XIII; Dr. Ph., 233; F. Dét., 382-3; A. S., 16, 123; Ant., 140.

It was this universal recognition and comprehensive appreciation of all codes and customs and philosophies, this ubiquity of interest and unprejudiced intellectual hospitality, more than any other single trait that could be named, which made Renan the spokesman of all sorts and conditions of men. He was continually making new acquisitions, and at the same time was unable to give up the old ones. His thirst for knowledge and experience was insatiable. His wish was to lead a multitude of lives all abreast of each other.

"Je voudrais, dans un autre monde, parler au féminin, d'une voix de femme, penser en femme, aimer en femme, prier en femme, voir comment les femmes ont raison." F. Dét., 39. Cf. Benjamin Constant, *Journal*, Paris, 1895, p. 56.

Speaking in 1890 of the faults of his early manner of writing, he sums them all up in the sentence: Je tenais trop à ne rien perdre, A. S., VI; and this remained to the end the condition of his mind, though not of his style. He had learned the capital art of omitting, indeed; but only to embrace the next occasion for expressing the opposite side.

Three orders of reality in particular are sharply distinguished and made very prominent in all Renan's writings; so prominent, in fact, that one of his best and most appreciative critics, M. Gabriel Monod, declares this three-fold grouping of experience, and the assertion of mutual equivalence among the groups thus obtained, to be the chief characteristic and the central feature in Renan's philosophical thought. These groups are: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

The following passage, from his earliest book, is typical of scores of others throughout his writings:

“Un beau sentiment vaut une belle pensée; une belle pensée vaut une belle action. Un système de philosophie vaut un poème, un poème vaut une découverte scientifique, une vie de science vaut une vie de vertu. L’homme parfait serait celui qui serait à la fois poète, philosophe, savant, homme vertueux.” A. S., 11; also 101; Mor. Crit., 358-9.

Truth, goodness and beauty, according to Renan, represent different modes in which the ultimate cosmic reality, whatever that may be, is reflected in human consciousness.

The question arises whether this is not, after all, simply an interpretation of reality in terms of human nature, a projection of his own self into external facts; in other words, a return to that very anthropocentrism which he so often condemned in other people?

The truth is that a man so many-sided as Renan, who has run the entire gamut, one may fairly say, of feelings and temperaments, and who lived so many lives in one, is too complex and abnormal a character to be fairly judged by ordinary standards. Is it any wonder that a personality so heterogeneous, who in thought was a man, in feeling a woman and in action a child; whose writings reflect now the reminiscent poetry of an outworn faith and again the subtle criticism of an aridly erudite intellect; a “tissue of contradictions,” as he calls himself: is it any wonder that such a man should find it impossible to represent on paper all the disparate medley of his conflicting judgments upon experience, even to their finest shades and transitions, within the inflexible limits of syllogistic logic?

But perhaps a more important cause still of logical contradiction than the freedom he at all times practiced in expressing his judgments is the freedom with which he allowed these judgments to form in his mind. Imbued with the Cartesian rationalism of the seventeenth century, especially as represented in Malebranche, he had early embraced the doctrine that reason, and reason alone, unhampered by will or desire, is the judge of all truth. Reason was conceived as a kind of balance for weighing ideas, producing belief or disbelief, according as the

scales dip this way or that. All reasoning, therefore, to be trustworthy, must be an objective process, unbiased as the mariner's compass.

"Les gens du monde qui croient qu'on se décide dans le choix de ses opinions par des raisons de sympathie ou d'antipathie s'étonneront certainement du genre de raisonnements qui m'écarta de la foi chrétienne, à laquelle j'avais tant de motifs de cœur et d'intérêt de rester attaché. Les personnes qui n'ont pas l'esprit scientifique ne comprennent guère qu'on laisse ses opinions se former hors de soi par une sorte de concrétion impersonnelle, dont on n'est en quelque sorte que le spectateur. En me livrant ainsi à la force des choses, je croyais me conformer aux règles de la grande école du XVII^e siècle, surtout de Malebranche, dont le premier principe est que la raison doit être contemplée, et qu'on n'est pour rien dans sa procréation; en sorte que le devoir de l'homme est de se mettre devant la vérité, dénué de toute personnalité, prêt à se laisser traîner où voudra la démonstration prépondérante. Loin de viser d'avance certains résultats, ces illustres penseurs voulaient que, dans la recherche de la vérité, on s'interdît d'avoir un désir, une tendance, un attachement personnel."²⁴ *Souv.*, 296-7.

But so far is this conception of reason from corresponding in fact to the psychical processes of humanity at large, that the opposite appears to be implied in nearly all the mental operations of the vast majority of mankind.

The position of Prof. James, for example, is the very opposite of that maintained by Renan in the passages above quoted. This writer insists that not only do men, as a matter of fact, allow their beliefs to be influenced by their emotions, such as hope, fear, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship, but that it is right we should be so influenced in certain cases.

"Our passional nature," he writes, "not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, 'do not decide, but leave the question open,' is itself a passional decision,—just like deciding

yes or no,—and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth.” *The Will to Believe*, 1897, p. II.

“Is it wiser or better,” he asks, “to yield to the fear that religion may be an error than to yield to the hope that it may be true?” p. 27.

“Where faith in a fact can help create the fact, that would be an insane logic which should say that faith running ahead of scientific evidence is the lowest kind of immortality into which a thinking being can fall.” p., 25.

“A rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule.” p. 28.

So far is reason from being the sole and ultimate arbiter of all truth, or an infallible and sufficient guide for attaining it, according to Prof. James, that

“Our reason is quite satisfied, in 999 cases out of every thousand of us, if it can find a few arguments that will do to recite in case our credulity is criticised by some one else. Our faith is faith in some one else’s faith, and in the greatest matters this is most the case.” P., 9.

But why quote this writer against Renan? The truth is that, notwithstanding the statements of Renan above quoted, and many others in the same key, he has himself affirmed the very position for which Prof. James contends. It is interesting to contrast the following passages with those last cited:

“L’attitude la plus logique du penseur devant la religion est de faire comme si elle était vraie. Il faut agir comme si Dieu et l’âme existaient. La religion entre ainsi dans le cas de ces nombreuses hypothèses telles que l’éther, les fluides électriques, lumineux, caloriques, nerveux, l’atome lui-même, que nous savons bien n’être que des symboles, des moyens commodes pour expliquer les phénomènes, et que nous maintenons tout de même.” F. Dét., 432; cf. *ibid.*, XVII.

And again:

“La Nature est immorale. . . Mais dans la conscience s’élève une voix sainte qui parle à l’homme d’un tout autre monde, le monde de l’idéal, le monde de la vérité, de la bonté,

de la justice. S'il n'y avait que la nature, on pourrait se demander si Dieu est nécessaire. Mais, depuis qu'il a existé un honnête homme, Dieu a été prouvé." Frag., 250. Cf. Job, XC; Frag., 321-323; A. S., 17-18, 56, 58, 152-3, 477; note 26; C. d'Angl., 6-7; Dial., VI, 30-1, 38, 147; Mor. Cr., II; Q. C., 235, 414.

But while in his writings, where it was a question merely of theorizing on the subject, we find both sides of his temperament affirmed in turn; it was the rationalistic side that seems to have prevailed in his conduct throughout. It was this predominance of the intellect over the emotions and the will which in early life had led him out of the church; and this event, in a psychological view of his development, was by far the most important of his life.

His separation from the church, in fact, marks the epoch of his mental growth when the torturing strain of his opposite tendencies had become unbearable, and it is impossible to separate a study of the causes of his contradictions from an examination of the factors which produced this central crisis in his life. The same causes operate in both cases. It was the sharp distinction between the rational and the emotional nature which his studies had led him to observe, combined with the unfinality of his unusually progressive mind, that made it impossible for him to continue in the career of a priest; and these same ultimate factors, intellectual duality and progressive unfinality, are responsible for many of the contradictions in his work.

Indeed, the more closely one examines the psychological factors of his apostacy, the more does this crisis appear as an experiment, under exceptionally favorable conditions, with the Cartesian principle of objective reason, rigorously and consistently applied in the sphere of theology and religion. It was Descartes and Malebranche, far more than Strauss or Gesenius, that led him away from the faith of his childhood.²⁵

His intense rationalism at the time of his apostacy is in striking contrast with the poetic idealism of his early surroundings; and these opposite temperaments no doubt underlie that system-

atic two-sidedness so obtrusively characteristic of all his philosophic speculations.

For the idealistic side, his "moral romanticism" as he calls it, no explanation seems necessary, or rather none is possible, beyond the general recognition of environmental pressure, the passive contagion of example and precept, working upon hereditary predispositions in the same direction. The general character of these influences has been sufficiently indicated in an earlier chapter.

For the rational side, however, which represents a later development, it is possible to assign more specific causes, and these must now be briefly set forth.

The more closely one looks at Renan's early development, the more does the course he actually followed appear to have been inevitable. Everything, after his removal to Paris, seems to have combined to undo the work of his childhood surroundings, by which he had been moulded for sixteen years.

The mere geographical change, from the quiet seclusion of Tréguier to cosmopolitan, glittering Paris, marks an epoch in his mental development. It was not merely a transfer from country to city, but a change to a different civilization; a sudden leap from medievalism into the modern age.

At Tréguier he had been in actual contact, he tells us, with the primitive world. The most remote past was still in existence in Brittany up to 1830. The life of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was daily before the eyes of those who lived in the towns. In the country, the epoch of the Welsh emigration, the fifth and sixth centuries, was plainly visible to the practiced eye.

"Le paganisme se dégageait derrière la couche chrétienne, souvent fort transparente. A cela se mêlaient des traits d'un monde plus vieux encore, que j'ai retrouvé chez les Lapons. En visitant, en 1870, avec le prince Napoléon, les huttes d'un campement de Lapons, près de Tromsøë, je crus plus d'une fois, dans des types de femmes et d'enfants, dans certains traits, dans certaines habitudes, voir ressusciter devant moi mes plus anciens souvenirs." *Souv.*, 87-8.

For the possibility of going to Paris he was indebted, next to his own industry and talents, to his sister Henriette. In the summer of 1838 he had won all the prizes of his class at Tréguier college, an achievement which enabled his sister, then a school-teacher in Paris, to procure him admission without cost to the famous little boarding-school, Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet. Lett. Sém., 1-2. He was in his sixteenth year. After a two days' journey—there were no railroads of course—, he was set down among scenes as novel to him as if he had come direct from Tahiti or Timbuctoo.

“Un lama bouddhiste ou un faquir musulman, transporté en un clin d'œil d'Asie en plein boulevard, serait moins surpris que je ne le fus en tombant subitement dans un milieu aussi différent de celui de mes vieux prêtres de Bretagne.” Souv., 172.

Nor was it his immediate surroundings alone,—mother, teachers, companions and playmates—of which he was deprived by this change of abode; all his habits of life were broken through. Even the church itself, Parisian catholicism, was so widely different from the catholicism of Tréguier in which he had grown up, as to be in effect a different religion.

“Ma venue à Paris fut le passage d'une religion à une autre. . . . Ce fut la crise la plus grave de ma vie.” Souv., 172-3.

This sharp contrast between the old and the new could hardly fail to invite comparison and provoke criticism. The Tréguier in his memory and the Paris around him, the naïve sincerity of the *vie spontanée* and the polish and tact of the *vie réfléchie*, were too incongruous to exist side by side in the same mind without starting the machinery of reflection, comparison and criticism. Up to this time his ideas and ideals had been shaped by authority, example and habit; they were now to be placed on a rational basis of his own construction.

In later life Renan saw very clearly the immense significance of this change. He indeed declares it to have been the primary cause not only of his leaving the church, but of all the

subsequent phases of development to which this separation in turn was to lead.

"Il est bien probable que, si un incident extérieur n'était venu me tirer brusquement du milieu honnête, mais borné, où s'était passée mon enfance, j'aurais conservé toute ma vie la foi qui m'était apparue d'abord comme l'expression absolue de la vérité." *Souv.*, 130-1; 158.

"Au fond, quand je m'étudie, j'ai en effet très peu changé; le sort m'avait en quelque sorte rivé dès l'enfance à la fonction que je devais accomplir. J'étais fait en arrivant à Paris; avant de quitter la Bretagne, ma vie était écrite d'avance." *Souv.*, 73.

The effects of his transplantation were still further intensified by his going home for the summer vacations. In this way the contrast was kept fresh in his mind. We may imagine the reflections of the young student, modernized and rationalized more and more as the years went by, and with the same exemption he had always enjoyed from manual toil, as he contemplated the customs and studied the minds of the unsophisticated, naïvely religious, sincere, conservative, virtuous rustics around him.

At school, too, during his three years at Saint Nicolas, the intellectual atmosphere was as different as possible from that at Tréguier College. He had come to Paris, he says, with a complete moral training, but ignorant to the last degree. With the exception of mathematics and ancient languages, in which he had laid a good foundation, he had everything to learn. Of science, history and modern literatures he knew nothing. It was a great surprise to him, he tells us, when he found that there was such a thing as a learned lay-man. He discovered that antiquity and the church are not everything, and ceased to look upon the death of Louis XIV as marking the end of the world.

"Le monde s'ouvrit pour moi. . . Saint-Nicolas était à cette époque la maison la plus brillante et la plus mondaine. . . Mes vieux prêtres de Bretagne savaient bien mieux les mathématiques et le latin que mes nouveaux maîtres; mais ils

vivaient dans des catacombes sans lumière et sans air. Ici, l'atmosphère du siècle circulait librement. Hugo et Lamartine me remplissaient la tête. Je compris la gloire, que j'avais cherchée si vaguement à la voûte de la chapelle de Tréguier. . . Les mots talent, éclat, réputation eurent un sens pour moi. J'étais perdu pour l'idéal modeste que mes anciens maîtres m'avaient inculqué." Souv., 185-6.

His early ideals, though not in reality discarded, were laid aside for a time, and a new direction given to his ambition. His three years at Saint Nicolas had completely transformed him. From a poor little country lad struggling vainly to emerge from his shell, he had grown to be a young man of remarkable alertness and quick perceptions. Souv., 195.

When from this school he passed, in 1841, to the theological seminary at Issy, he was obliged once more to adjust himself to a different medium, in respect both of teachers and studies. His new instructors recalled to his mind the venerable priests of Tréguier College, who had always seemed to him, with their heavy, old-fashioned copes, like the magi, from whose lips came the eternal truths. Souv., 11. His readings, too, again became more austere. The superficial rhetoric of Saint Nicolas, as he retrospectively calls it,—somewhat unfairly, it would seem. Cf. Lett. Sém., 38, 131—was replaced by natural philosophy, logic, mathematics and history. Hugo and Lamartine were exchanged for Pascal and Malebranche, and he applied himself, besides, to Euler and Leibnitz, Descartes, Locke, Reid, and Dugald Stewart.

Among the texts which served as a basis for instruction at Issy, during two years, one was destined to be of special significance in his mental evolution. This was the so-called *Philosophie de Lyon*, a kind of Cartesian scholasticism compiled in the eighteenth century by the Jansenist arch-bishop of Lyons, and which bears the ominous title: *Institutiones Philosophicae, Auctoritate D. D. Archiepiscopi Lugdunensis Ad Usus Scholarum Suae Dioecesis Editae*.

This treatise is divided into three parts, dealing respectively with logic, metaphysics and physics. The following sample,

taken almost at random, may serve to indicate the general character and method of this work:

"Part III, *Physica Specialis, seu de Terra et Corporibus Terrestribus. Sectio Prima, Capitis Primi: De Igne.*

Propositio: Ignis est fluidum, ubique diffusum, cujus partes sunt tenuissimae, elasticae, rigidae, motuque perniciosissimo agitatae."

Various questions are then discussed concerning the properties of fire and the mode of its action upon bodies, and finally directions given for experiments with fire. Whenever it seems to the author that the propositions affirmed in the text are likely to be called in question, a number of possible objections are disposed of, by hook or by crook, under the separate heading: *Solvuntur Objecta.*

In this separate heading Renan very soon took a special interest, and more often than not the objections discussed were his own.

"Ces objections sont ensuite résolues, souvent d'une manière qui laisse toute leur force aux idées hétérodoxes qu'on prétend réduire à néant. Ainsi, sous le couvert de réfutations faibles, tout l'ensemble des idées modernes venait à nous." *Souv.*, 248.

Thus was his critical faculty provoked and his rationalism encouraged more and more, and his Catholic faith undermined, even by the very studies which were intended to establish that faith on firm and stable foundations.

"Dans un tel système," he writes nearly half a century later, "la raison est avant toute chose, la raison prouve la révélation, la divinité de l'Écriture et l'autorité de l'Église. Cela fait, la porte est ouverte à toutes les déductions. . . . Ce n'est pas ma faute si mes maîtres m'avaient enseigné la logique, et, par leurs argumentations impitoyables, avaient fait de mon esprit un tranchant d'acier." *Souv.*, 281, 303. Also cf. 246, 296-7, 341, 318-19, 389.

The first result of this course in theological dialectics, which at least afforded an excellent drill in deductive logic, was to destroy completely Renan's confidence in scholastic methods of

testing and establishing truth. *Souv.*, 250. Yet it was by means of these very methods that his growing doubts were to be dispelled and his tottering faith renewed. The result might have been predicted.

Still further were his rationalistic tendencies encouraged by the extreme solitude to which his manner of living condemned him in the seminaries. During his two years at Issy, he tells us, he never once sought permission to see Paris. It is true that he indulged in occasional outings with the rest of the school (*Lett. Sém.*, 58, 70, 107, 113, 114, 119, 144, 149-50, 163, 174, 223, 288); but at home he appears to have lived to himself, like the veriest hermit.

His books were his world. Even in recreation hours, instead of joining in the games, he would pass the time on a seat in the grounds, reading philosophic disquisitions about the existence of God, (how significant!) and trying to keep warm in the winter by wearing several overcoats.

Such a life of reflection and study, of introspective seclusion and turning-away from matters of present and practical moment, combined with physical inaction, was certain to leave permanent traces in his mind no less than his body.

"Ma croissance était à peine achevée; ma taille se voûtait. Mais ma passion l'emporta. Je m'y livrai avec d'autant plus de sécurité que je la croyais bonne. C'était une sorte de fureur; mais pouvais-je croire que l'ardeur de penser, que je voyais louer . . . fût blâmable et dût me mener à un résultat que j'eusse repoussé de toutes mes forces si j'avais pu l'entrevoir?" *Souv.*, 244-5.

His reason for being so exclusively devoted to books at this time becomes clear on reading his letters, especially those to his sister. He was busy transferring the faith of his childhood from the rock of tradition to the arid sands of Cartesian psychology; and his sister was the only person in the world to whom he could turn for effective sympathy in this struggle to get rid of his doubts through a process of rational conviction. But she was now far away. Since January, 1841, she had left Paris to accept a position as governess in Poland, which in

those days was several weeks distant, and where she remained in bitter exile for ten long years. It is to this separation that we owe the beautiful volume, *Lettres Intimes*, every reader of which has learned to pronounce the name of Henriette Renan with profound respect.

There can be no doubt that her letters did more than any other single influence to determine the course of Renan's life. Cf. Lett. Sémi., 1-2, 26, 33, 102, 104, 136, 161, 173, 259, 327. It is true that she never attempted to influence her brother's beliefs directly, but her indirect influence was all the greater. Again and again she exhorts him, implores him, to be honest with the truth; to make no concessions to fear, nor compromise with expediency. Truth and duty alone, his own reason and his own conscience, the most absolute intellectual and moral integrity, she never wearies of insisting, must decide so weighty a question. Cf. Lett. Sémi., 326.

When his studies were drawing to a close and the time approached for him to decide irrevocably whether or not he would continue in his priestly career, she sent him, through a friend, out of her own hard-earned savings, the sum of 1,500 francs for immediate needs, in order that he might feel entirely free, so far as irrelevant considerations of livelihood were concerned, to decide either for or against remaining in the church.

But with all her womanly sympathy and inexhaustible sisterly love it is certain that the net result of her influence was only to exalt still further the office of reason in the process of forming and sifting religious beliefs. By always insisting that he must fight out the battle for himself and think his own way out of his difficulties, guided by reason and conscience alone, she still further confirmed his own conception of reason as the sole and ultimate arbiter of all truth. It is an interesting fact that this same sister, the guardian angel of his early life, as Madame Darmsteter very properly calls her, who in his childhood had taken him by the hand on winter evenings to prayers in the village cathedral, sheltered from snow and rain under the ample folds of her cloak; this same sister in

later years, his cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, as he himself describes her, was to lead him away from that self-same faith in which she had cradled his earliest youth.

And if it is true that hers was the leading influence in her brother's apostacy, must we not say that his very decision to repress or ignore all the promptings of emotion or passion, and to follow pure reason alone, was itself the result of a passional impulse: the omnipotent love of a sister? It was not merely his own faith in reason; it was still more his faith in his sister's faith, that led to this crisis in his life.

This chapter has failed of its purpose if it has not brought into clear relief the powerful contrast between the environmental influences at work on Renan during his studies in Paris, and those which had moulded his character in Brittany up to his sixteenth year.

His removal to Paris, seven years of diligent study and extensive reading, and much reflection; an intellectual and spiritual solitude broken only by the frequent letters of his distant sister, who essentially reinforced the ultra-rationalistic tendencies of his favorite authors: all these influences from within and without combined to superimpose on his earlier character a second self, and make him a man of opposite temperaments and correspondingly opposite ideals. The saintly and the worldly ideals, for ever at feud in literature as in life, are reflected in his writings alternately, according as the Tréguier or the Parisian self is holding the pen.

Before concluding this chapter with an estimate of Renan's life and work as a whole, it may be of interest to note with what feelings he himself looked back upon his career. We shall find that his judgment is different according as he contemplates his past life from the point of view of greatest enjoyment for himself, or of making the most of his opportunities in behalf of humanity at large.

Few great writers have been more deeply convinced that life is a good,—the mere living. His *Souvenirs* concludes with the words:

“Mon expérience de la vie a donc été fort douce, et je ne

crois pas qu'il y ait eu . . . beaucoup d'êtres plus heureux que moi. . . . J'ai tant joui dans cette vie, que je n'ai vraiment pas le droit de réclamer une compensation d'outre-tombe. L'infinie bonté que j'ai rencontrée en ce monde m'inspire la conviction que l'éternité est remplie par une bonté non moindre, en qui j'ai une confiance absolue. L'existence qui m'a été donnée sans que je l'eusse demandée a été pour moi un bienfait. Si elle m'était offerte, je l'accepterais de nouveau avec reconnaissance." Souv., 373-8.

Similar statements abound in his books. From a hedonistic point of view no one ever surveyed his own life with more genuine self-satisfaction.

"Tout pesé, si j'avais à recommencer ma vie, avec le droit d'y faire des ratures, je n'y changerais rien." Souv., 362.

"Son idéal ne dépasse pas la réalité," complains M. Séailles, "Il ne conçoit pas mieux que la vie d'un homme commençant comme il a commencé pour finir comme il finit." E. R., 324.

But Renan has himself forestalled this criticism. For a very different tone is adopted in speaking of his own past whenever he considers what might have been done, with his talents and opportunities, for civilization at large through the advancement of science.

There can be no doubt that rational progress was, after all, his highest ideal, and the advancement of science his real religion. No one familiar with his work as a whole will dispute his own confession on this point:

"Les mathématiques et l'induction physique ont toujours été les éléments fondamentaux de mon esprit, les seules pierres de ma bâtisse qui n'aient jamais changé d'assise et qui servent toujours." Souv., 251. Cf. Dr. Ph., 111. Cf. Lett. . Sém., 5, 15, 16, 41, 164, 344.

It is said that after his death there was found in his desk a piece of paper on which he had written the words:

"De tout ce que j'ai fait, c'est le *Corpus* que j'aime le mieux." This was the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*.

Renan's predilection for positive science and exact scholarship explains his frequent regrets at having devoted his life

to history and literature, instead of to natural science.²⁶ Whenever in later life he recalled the extreme interest he had early felt in biological science, and compared his own achievements with the undying fame of a Darwin, he seems to have looked with envy upon the work of his English contemporary, whose epoch-making demonstrations he might, as he later believed, have partly anticipated.

"Je serais sorti du séminaire sans avoir fait d'hébreu ni de théologie? La physiologie et les sciences naturelles m'auraient entraîné; or, je peux bien le dire, l'ardeur extrême que ces sciences vitales excitaient dans mon esprit me fait croire que, si je les avais cultivées d'une façon suivie, je fusse arrivé à plusieurs des résultats de Darwin, que j'entrevois." *Souv.*, 262-3.

"C'est à en donner le frisson," exclaims M. Schérer, "et nous l'avons échappé belle. M. Renan, je n'en doute pas, avait tout ce qu'il faut pour être un Darwin, mais Darwin, lui, ne nous aurait pas rendu notre Renan." *Ét. litt. con.*, VIII, p. 98.

But Renan's readers doubtless have no occasion to regret his alienation from natural science; nor, most probably, have the readers of Darwin. Renan could hardly have improved upon the *Origin of Species*, to say the least; and who would have written the *Vie de Jésus*?

The simple truth is that Renan's regret over what might have been was, as usual, a quarrelling with the inevitable; for it is safe to say, in view of his dominant interests at the time, that he never was really free to exchange the library for the laboratory. At every step in his progress, from his schooldays at Tréguier to his apostacy in 1845, and thence forward, his work in the future seems predetermined, in general outline at least, by the intellectual and spiritual momentum acquired through his work in the past. Not indeed in the sense that no other course was possible, but in the sense that no other could have seemed reasonable. It is not meant that the impelling necessity was a species of fatalism independent of his

own personality; it was simply his own endeavor to make the most of past acquisitions.

His entrance upon a theological career, to begin with, was not in any sense a matter of free choice. Almost from infancy he had been destined for the priesthood.

"J'étais né prêtre *a priori*, comme tant d'autres naissent militaires, magistrats." Souv., 153. Cf. *ibid.*, 309.

"Mes maîtres me rendirent tellement impropre à toute besogne temporelle, que je fus frappé d'une marque irrévocable pour la vie spirituelle." Souv., 135; also 140. Cf. Lett. Sém., 196-7, 202, 238, 279.

Fatherless at the age of five, his early education was left entirely to women and priests. In the little Tréguier seminary, everything, example no less than precept, impelled him in the direction of theology. All his fellow students, unless they failed in their studies, became priests as a matter of course. Souv., 137, 153-4. Studious and gifted as he was, therefore, the possibility of a lay career never for a moment entered his mind. His teachers were his living ideals; and his highest ambition was to be like unto them,—a priest. Souv., II; 140. How indeed can a child be properly said to choose a calling, having no comparative knowledge whatever, either of the professions among which he is expected to choose, nor of his own capacities or aptitudes for such professions?

In his later period Renan took every opportunity to say pleasant things about his early teachers, and about the education they imparted. Souv., 134-5. It was to those stern-visaged, austere-mannered monks, he very truthfully says, that he owed the best that was in him. Souv., 11. But, of course, these men were as far as possible from creating in their pupils an interest for natural science, as he further explains, Souv., 130-5, and his admiration for their persons merely shows how strong was the bond by which he was bound to the church. Even after his transfer to Paris, in the autumn of 1838, there was no provocation, during his four years at St. Nicolas, and in fact no opportunity for a change of career. Souv., 169, 180, 195. It is quite certain, indeed, according to numerous passing allusions

in his letters of the time, that his interest in science was not aroused till 1841, when he entered the seminary at Issy. It was there that he first developed that aversion for metaphysics and admiration of positive science which he retained to the end. *Souv.*, 250, 297-8.

Here, then, for the first time, was there a parting of the ways, and an opportunity to change his course; and the question arises why, despite his recently acquired enthusiasm for science and distrust of metaphysics, he still went on with his theological course. There were several reasons. Apart from the influence of his directors and confessors, the power of mental inertia and of daily routine, and what may be called the contagion of personal and material surroundings, his letters of the time make it plain that, between Issy and St. Sulpice, in reality only different branches of the same institution, there was no halting-place. There was no inducement to change, and there was every inducement to go on. It is true that, at this critical period of his life, he was continually agitated by religious doubts, provoked by his readings in philosophy and encouraged by the letters of his sister (*Cf. Lett. Int.*, 39). But he had not gone far enough yet in his studies to be entirely certain that, in this conflict between doubt and dogma, doubt was right and dogma wrong. *Souv.*, 319. It was not till several years later, when suspicion had ripened into conviction, that he had the courage to break with his past; and even then the immediate occasion was an external pressure. *Souv.*, 392-3. Indeed, when we consider his sister's constant warnings against hasty and final committal to a career he might one day regret, the fact that he did not change alone affords a strong presumption that he could not. His professors, moreover, who had the advantage of being also his confessors, urged him onward in his clerical course, *Souv.*, 260-1, 271-2, 405; and their reasons, all the more persuasive for his own indecision and lack of financial means, finally prevailed over the gentler, and it must be admitted the wiser, counsels of his sister.

The only other period of his life when he might reasonably have turned to natural science was immediately after his seces-

sion from the church, in 1845. The opportunity was all the more favorable as his new position brought him into intimate relations with M. Berthelot, then, like himself, laying the foundations of his future greatness. But here again his letters show that the course he actually pursued was inevitable. He was now 22 years old, well versed in Hebrew and biblical studies generally, and with a power over the pen which gave promise of success as a writer. On the other hand, there was nothing in his prospects to tempt him to abandon the way on which he had now gone so far. A change to biological science would appear to have been the least possible of all, for he lacked at this juncture, as he himself declares, the most essential quality of the scientist: the capacity for specialization. Souv., 397-9; 402. Cf. A. S., 11-12; Séailles, E. R., 31.

In truth, the struggles involved in his recent apostacy had made too deep a groove in his mind; he was too much preoccupied in thought and feeling with the creeds he had just discarded, to be able to settle down calmly to the patient plodding of laboratory experimentation. The inner momentum of his whole being, naturally enough, impelled him in the direction of religious reform, and there was no external influence to deflect him from this path. Like St. Paul—the comparison is his own—his purpose in life was summed up in the wish: "*cupio omnes fieri qualis et ego sum.*" Souv., 404. In his then condition of mind, secular science seemed to him unworthy a moment's serious thought, save in so far as it might take the place of religion in human life. A. S., 38-9. Cf. Souv., 398.

"J'étais terriblement dépaycé," he writes of this period nearly half a century later. "L'univers me faisait l'effet d'un désert sec et froid. Du moment que le christianisme n'était pas la vérité, le reste me parut indifférent, frivole, à peine digne d'intérêt. L'écroulement de ma vie sur elle-même me laissait un sentiment de vide comme celui qui suit un accès de fièvre ou un amour brisé." Souv., 330.

"Si la science devait rester ce qu'elle est, il faudrait la subir en la maudissant; car elle a détruit, et elle n'a pas rebâti; elle a tiré l'homme d'un doux sommeil, sans lui adoucir la réalité." A. S., 93.

We must not forget that when Renan left the church, he was not merely discarding a creed, but renouncing a livelihood as well, and a career for which all his past life had aimed to prepare him. Lett Sém., 279. Such a step is not taken without a prolonged intellectual and spiritual struggle. It was the battle of conscience against self-interest, of spirit against the claims of matter, if we may so express it, subverting the very foundations of his spiritual self. Such a crisis must perforce leave its mark in the mind and temperament of the victim. So with Renan. It was impossible for him to begin work, as it were *de novo*, in a field unrelated to these recent struggles. The most pressing need of the moment, he seems to have felt, was to rebuild, in more stately form if possible, the shattered mansions of his faith. Destruction called for reconstruction, very naturally; and this led to an independent, historical study of the Christian religion, eventually resulting in the well-known volumes: *Les Origines du Christianisme* and *L'histoire du Peuple d'Israel*, together with numerous articles and essays on related subjects.

"Une seule occupation me parut digne de remplir ma vie: c'était de poursuivre mes recherches critiques sur le christianisme par les moyens beaucoup plus larges que m'offrait la science laïque." Souv., 343.

"Le livre le plus important du dix-neuvième siècle," he writes in 1848, "devrait avoir pour titre: *Histoire critique des Origines du Christianisme*. Oeuvre admirable que j'envie à celui qui la réalisera, et qui sera celle de mon âge mûr, si la mort et tant de fatalités extérieures . . . ne viennent m'en empêcher." A. S., 279. Cf. *ibid.* 185: "Cette merveilleuse histoire qui, exécutée d'une manière scientifique et définitive, révolutionnerait la pensée."

At the time of his apostacy, therefore, in 1845, the plan of his life was already determined. Indeed, he says this himself:

"L'idée qu'en abandonnant l'Église, je resterais fidèle à Jésus, s'empara de moi, et, si j'avais été capable de croire aux apparitions, j'aurais certainement vu Jésus me disant: "Abandonne-moi pour être mon disciple." Cette pensée me soutenait, m'en-

hardissait. Je peux dire que, dès lors, la *Vie de Jésus* était écrite dans mon esprit. La croyance à l'éminente personnalité de Jésus, qui est l'âme de ce livre, avait été ma force dans ma lutte contre la théologie. Jésus a bien réellement toujours été mon maître."²⁷ Souv., B., 214. Cf. A. S., 278-9.

The fact is that, notwithstanding all his contradictions of detail, Renan's life and work as a whole is remarkable for its logical development, not only in the sense of being an almost passive product of antecedent conditions, or environmental pressure; but in the higher sense of adhering to the principles and maturing the plans of his early youth. Cf. Séailles, E. R., 41.

There are few great men in whose lives the formative power of circumstances is more evident, or less interfered with by their own wills; and one of his most characteristic traits, without doubt, is the predominance of intellect and feeling over the will. As Mr. Babbitt says, the masculine religion of the will was sacrificed to the feminine religion of the heart. • Cf. Mahrenholtz, E. R., 93.

But when we contemplate the circumstances of his life, this is not in the least surprising. We have already noted in passing that everything in his life, from earliest childhood on, favored a subordination of the will to feeling and intellect. We recall that he was brought up by women and priests. Cf. F. Dét., XXX; Souv., 153; VIII-IX, 14-15, 33-4, 114. His delicate health as a child debarred him from participating in the self-asserting, will-developing, rough-and-tumble sports of the boys, who laughed at his delicacy and called him "made-moiselle." In his home there was no father, and his mother and sister, as well as the girl playmates of whom he was so fond, did much to encourage this "feminine religion of the heart." The very poverty and simplicity of his life at home, with no opportunity for manual labor, decided the nature of his tasks. For reflection and study he had an abundance of time, as well as abundant encouragement and good opportunities. His brilliant mental endowments were apparent at once, and the distinction gained in the class-room amply consoled him for the

taunts of the boys in the play-grounds, thus encouraging still further the development of reason at the expense of the will, and of mind at the expense of his body.

We should remember, too, his years of brooding solitude in Paris, where the feminine influences of mother, sister and play-mates were replaced by the rationalistic influences of Cartesian philosophy. A religion of reason replaced the religion of feeling; but there was nothing during his student years to encourage the development of an active will, and much to discourage it. And the same is true of his later life.

His very respect for the truth, and especially his theory that in the quest for truth all personal bias should be suppressed, would tend, so far as this theory was carried out in his own practice, still further to develop his intellect at the cost of his will. Such an attitude must favor compromise, and never can lead to blustering self-assertion. Renan was at once too sincere and too clear-headed a man to be tempted to dogmatize on any one side of a debatable question.

"Un esprit éclairé se dit à lui-même: Si, depuis que la raison existe, tant de milliers de symboles ont eu la prétention de présenter la vérité complète, et si cette prétention s'est toujours trouvée vaine, est-il bien probable que je sois plus heureux que tant d'autres et que la vérité ait attendu ma venue ici-bas pour faire sa définitive révélation?" C. d'Angl., 198-9.

"Si une société, si une philosophie, si une religion eût possédé la vérité absolue, cette société, cette philosophie, cette religion aurait vaincu les autres et vivrait seule à l'heure qu'il est. Tous ceux qui, jusqu'ici, ont cru avoir raison se sont trompés, nous le voyons clairement. Pouvons-nous, sans folle outrecuidance, croire que l'avenir ne nous jugera pas comme nous jugeons le passé? Souv., 71. Cf. A. S., 446-7.

This conviction, joined with a sincerity which in him was second nature, led him to show an unusual regard for opponents. No one ever saw more clearly, or recognized more candidly, the soul of truth in things erroneous, or of good in things evil.

"Ici, je plaide un peu contre moi-même; mais je ne suis pas un prêtre; je suis un penseur; comme tel je dois tout voir. Un

ouvrage bien complet ne doit pas avoir besoin qu'on le réfute. L'envers de chaque pensée doit y être indiqué, de manière que le lecteur saisisse d'un seul coup d'oeil les deux faces opposées dont se compose toute vérité." Dr. Ph., 256.

One of the central features of all his philosophy was the belief that truth and error, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, wisdom and folly, and other such opposites, shade off into one another by gradations as imperceptible as the colors in a dove's neck. *Souv.*, 70-1.

"Ne rien aimer, ne rien haïr absolument, devient alors une sagesse." *Souv.*, 71.

"L'impression des choses humaines n'est complète que si on fait une place à l'ironie à côté des larmes, à la pitié à côté de la colère, au sourire à côté du respect." Dr. Ph., V. Also cf. I-II.

Such convictions, when not only preached but lived, as in Renan's case they were, have of course no tendency to develop a strong, active will. One of his latest critics, Mr. Babbitt, is quite right when he says:

"Everything tends to assume in the intelligence of Renan the form of an acute antimony—reason and sentiment, the classic and the romantic, the real and the ideal, science and morality. He is unable to fuse together and reconcile these contradictory terms in the light of a higher insight. Instead of choosing between opposite and equally plausible conclusions, he sets "the different lobes of his brain" to dialoguing about them. Such a state, if prolonged, would lead to a paralysis of the will." *Souv.*, B., *Introd.*, XXVII.

The judgment of another critic, still more unfavorable, is also true:

"After all is said one cannot but feel that there is a touch of something unwholesome in Renan's writings, though, doubtless, nothing whatever of it in his life, which was as blameless as it was kindly and gracious. There was too little of fierceness and indignation against what was false and foul, too much tolerance for the partially untrue and the partially unclean. To put the matter shortly, no one who loves the manliness and sincerity of

the puritan spirit can fail to feel a certain disgust at, and contempt for, Renan's standpoint in regard to both morality and religion." *Spectator*, 79: 897 ff.

But surely no less true are the words with which his biographer concludes the story of his life:

"Veracity, like charity, covers a multitude of sins . . . Do we not crave above all things from a gifted man, working in Renan's intellectual sphere, that he shall tell us what he really and truly thinks and feels, whether the world likes it or not?" *Espinasse*, E. R., 235.

And sincere he certainly was, throughout life. Whatever may be said of the truth of his teachings, his sincerity is beyond question. If he failed to see human relations and eternal realities in the right perspective, this was the fault of his instrument, not of his purpose. On this point there is no disputing his own testimony:

"Ce que j'ai toujours eu, c'est l'amour de la vérité. Je veux qu'on mette sur ma tombe (ah! si elle pouvait être au milieu du cloître! mais le cloître, c'est l'église, et l'église, bien à tort, ne veut pas de moi), je veux, dis-je qu'on mette sur ma tombe: *Veritatem dilexi*. Oui, j'ai aimé la vérité . . . J'ai déchiré les liens les plus chers pour lui obéir. Je suis sûr d'avoir bien fait . . . Ce témoignage, je le porterai haut et ferme sur ma tête au jugement dernier." *Disc.*, 215-16. Cf. F. Dét., XXXIV; *Souv.*, 305-6; Séailles, E. R., 22, 24, 315. Also the letter to his friend Cognat, Sep. 11, 1846.

But perhaps this paper has been too unappreciative and, on the whole, too unsympathetic; and lest his truth-loving spirit should have cause to reproach his expositor with neglecting his greatest message to the world, sincerity and truthfulness, it seems only fair at this point, in bidding our author a long farewell, to allow him a final word in defence of his own position on the subjects discussed in this paper.

"Dans cette grande crise que l'avènement de l'esprit positif fait subir de nos jours aux croyances morales, j'ai défendu plutôt qu'amoindri la part de l'idéal. Je n'ai pas été de ces esprits timides qui croient que la vérité a besoin de pénombre et

que l'infini craint le grand air. J'ai tout critiqué, et, quoi qu'on dise, j'ai tout maintenu. J'ai rendu plus de services au bien en ne dissimulant rien de la réalité qu'en enveloppant ma pensée de ces voiles hypocrites qui ne trompent personne. Notre critique a plus fait pour la conservation de la religion que toutes les apologies. Nous avons trouvé à Dieu un riche écrin de synonymes. Si nos raisons de croire aux réparations d'outre-tombe peuvent sembler frêles, celles d'autrefois, étaient elles beaucoup plus fortes? *Teste David cum Sibylla!* . . . L'ordre social, comme l'ordre théologique, provoque la question: Qui sait si la vérité n'est pas triste? L'édifice de la société humaine porte sur un grand vide. Nous avons osé le dire. Rien de plus dangereux que de patiner sur une couche de glace sans songer combien cette couche est mince. Je n'ai jamais pu croire que, dans aucun ordre de choses, il fût mauvais d'y voir trop clair. Toute vérité est bonne à savoir. Car toute vérité clairement sue rend fort ou prudent, deux choses également nécessaires à ceux que leur devoir, une ambition imprudente ou leur mauvais sort appellent à se mêler des affaires de cette pauvre humanité." Dr. Ph., 262-4. Cf. Monod, Renan, 36-46.

APPENDIX A: NOTES.

Note 1.—It is interesting to compare the view of a professional modern psychologist. Prof. James, distinguishing between “refined” or “universal” supernaturalism, and “piecemeal” supernaturalism, inclines to affirm the latter on the identical ground on which it is rejected by Renan.

“For refined supernaturalism,” he writes, “the world of the ideal has no efficient causality, and never bursts into the world of phenomena at particular points. . . . Universalistic supernaturalism surrenders, it seems to me, too easily to naturalism. . . . In this universalistic way of taking the world, the essence of practical religion seems to me to evaporate. . . . In spite of its being so shocking to the reigning intellectual taste, I believe that a candid consideration of piece-meal supernaturalism and a complete discussion of all its metaphysical bearings will show it to be the hypothesis by which the largest number of legitimate requirements are met.” *Var. Rel. Exp.*, 521-3.

Note 2. “La notion du surnaturel, avec ses impossibilités, n’apparaît que le jour où naît la science expérimentale de la nature. L’homme étranger à toute idée de physique, qui croit qu’en priant il change la marche des nuages, arrête la maladie et la mort même, ne trouve dans le miracle rien d’extraordinaire.” *V. J.*, 41.

“La croyance au miracle est, en effet, la conséquence d’un état intellectuel où le monde est considéré comme gouverné par la fantaisie et non par des lois immuables. Sans doute, ce n’est pas ainsi que l’envisagent les supernaturalistes modernes, lesquels, forcés par la science, qu’ils n’osent froisser assez hardiment, d’admettre un ordre stable dans la nature, supposent seulement que l’action libre de Dieu peut parfois le changer, et conçoivent ainsi le miracle comme une dérogation à des lois établies. Mais ce concept, je le répète, n’était nullement celui des hommes primitifs. Le miracle n’était pas conçu alors comme surnaturel. L’idée de surnaturel n’apparaît que quand l’idée des lois de la nature s’est nettement formulée et s’impose même à ceux qui veulent timidement concilier le merveilleux et l’expérience. . . . Pour les hommes primitifs, au contraire, le miracle était parfaitement naturel et surgissait à chaque pas, ou plutôt il n’y avait ni

lois ni nature pour ces âmes naïves, voyant partout action immédiate d'agents libres. . . Ce n'est pas d'un raisonnement, mais de tout l'ensemble des sciences modernes que sort cet immense résultat: il n'y a pas de surnaturel." A. S., 45-6.

Note 3. Renan's position on this question is more fully set forth in his article *la Métaphysique et son avenir*, 1860, and again, three years later, in a letter to Mr. Berthelot:

"Si l'on entend par métaphysique le droit et le pouvoir qu'a l'homme de s'élever audessus des faits, d'en voir les lois, la raison, l'harmonie, la poésie, la beauté . . . il y a une métaphysique. . . Mais si l'on veut dire qu'il existe une science première contenant les principes de toutes les autres, une science qui peut à elle seule, et par des combinaisons abstraites, nous amener à la vérité sur Dieu, le monde, l'homme, je ne vois pas la nécessité d'une telle catégorie du savoir humain. . . Il n'y a pas de vérité qui n'ait son point de départ dans l'expérience scientifique, qui ne sorte directement ou indirectement d'un laboratoire ou d'une bibliothèque, car tout ce que nous savons, nous le savons par l'étude de la nature ou de l'histoire." Frag., 282-4. Cf. *ibid.*, 263, 265. C. d'Agl., 206.

"J'ai nié autrefois l'existence de la métaphysique comme science à part et progressive; je ne la nie pas comme ensemble de notions immuables à la façon de la logique. Ces sciences n'apprennent rien, mais elles font bien analyser ce que l'on savait. En tout cas, elles sont totalement hors des faits. Les règles du syllogisme, les axiomes fondamentaux de la raison pure, seraient vrais comme les mathématiques, quand même il n'y aurait personne pour les percevoir. Mathématiques pures, logique, métaphysique, autant de sciences de l'éternel, de l'immuable, nullement historiques, nullement expérimentales, n'ayant aucun rapport avec l'existence et les faits." Frag., 174-5.

Note 4. "Il n'est pas sûr que la Terre ne manque pas sa destinée, comme cela est probablement arrivé à des mondes innombrables; il est même possible que notre temps soit un jour considéré comme le point culminant après lequel l'humanité n'aura fait qu'échoir; mais l'univers ne connaît pas le découragement; il commencera sans fin l'oeuvre avortée; chaque échec le laisse jeune, alerte, plein d'illusions. . . Courage, courage, nature! . . . Obstine-toi; répare pour la millionième fois la maille de filet qui se casse. . . Vise, vise encore le but que tu manques depuis l'éternité. . . Tu as l'infini de l'espace et l'infini du temps pour ton expérience. Quand

on a le droit de se tromper impunément, on est toujours sûr de réussir." Souv., XX-XXI.

"The universe . . . obtains its object by an infinite variety of germs. What Javeh desires always happens. Let us not be troubled; if we are among those who are going astray, who are running counter to the supreme will, that is of little consequence. Humanity is one of the countless ant-hills among which the experiment of reason is being carried on in the midst of space; if we miss our goal, others will reach it." P. Isr., II:454-5; *ibid.* vol. V, 361.

Note 5. The same view is taken in his *Études d'histoire religieuse*, p. 419.:

"Dieu, Providence, immortalité, autant de bons vieux mots, un peu lourds peut-être, que la philosophie interprêtera dans des sens de plus en plus raffinés, mais qu'elle ne remplacera jamais avec avantage. Sous une forme ou sous une autre, Dieu sera toujours le résumé de nos besoins suprasensibles, la catégorie de l'idéal (c'est à dire la forme sous laquelle nous concevons l'idéal." Cf. Frag., 250; A. S., 479.

Note 6. "Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness, as we call it," writes Prof. James in his latest book, "is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. . . . No account of the universe in its totality can be final, which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. . . . They may determine attitudes, though they cannot furnish formulas, and open a region, though they fail to give a map. At any rate they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality. . . .

. . . If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits. . . . The truth is that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favor of the same conclusions." Var. Rel. Exp., 388, 73, 74. Prof. James explains that he is dealing for the moment with the *is*, not with the *ought*. All he contends for is that the sub-conscious and non-rational does, as a matter of fact, hold primacy over reason in the religious realm. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 422-4, 427, 456.

Note 7. "How do we know," asks Prof. James, "that consciousness is generated *de novo* in each particular brain? May not

consciousness exist anterior to the brain, behind the scenes, co-eval with the world?

The production of such a thing as consciousness in the brain is the absolute world-enigma,—something so paradoxical and abnormal as to be a stumbling block to Nature, and almost a self-contradiction. Hum. Im., 21.

Even though our soul's life (as here below it is revealed to us) may be in literal strictness the function of a brain that perishes, yet it is not at all impossible, but on the contrary quite possible, that the life may still continue when the brain itself is dead." Ibid., 11-12.

Note 8. Compare the famous declaration of Huxley:

"If there is one thing plainer than another, it is that neither the pleasures nor the pains, of life in the merely animal world are distributed according to desert; for it is admittedly impossible for the lower orders of sentient beings to deserve either the one or the other. If there is a generalization from the facts of human life, which has the assent of thoughtful men in every age and country, it is that the violator of ethical rules constantly escapes the punishment which he deserves; that the wicked flourishes like the green bay-tree, while the righteous begs his bread; that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children; that, in the realm of nature, ignorance is punished just as severely as wilful wrong; and that thousands upon thousands of innocent beings suffer for the crime, or the unintentional trespass, of one." *Evolution and Ethics*, Lond., 1893, p. 12.

So likewise felt Goethe:

"Denn unfühlend
Ist die Natur:
Es leuchtet die Sonne
Über böse und gute,
Und dem Verbrecher
Glänzen wie dem Besten
Der Mond und die Sterne.

Wind und Ströme,
Donner und Hagel
Rauschen ihren Weg
Und ergreifen,
Vorübereilend,
Einen und den andern.

Auch so das Glück
Tappt unter die Menge,
Fasst bald des Knaben

Lockige Unschuld,
 Bald auch den kahlen
 Schuldigen Scheitel.

Nach ewigen, ehrnen,
 Grossen Gesetzen
 Müssen wir alle
 Unseres Daseins
 Kreise vollenden. . . . "

Note 9. "I have said nothing," writes Prof James of his Gifford Lectures, "about immortality or the belief therein, for to me it seems a secondary point. If our ideals are only cared for in 'eternity,' I do not see why we might not be willing to resign their care to other hands than ours. Yet I sympathize with the urgent impulse to be present ourselves, and in the conflict of impulses, both of them so vague yet both of them noble, I know not how to decide. It seems to me it is eminently a case for facts to testify." Var. Rel. Exp., 524.

But in the case of many people, if not most, it is the death of a loved one, child, parent, or friend, that reinforces this "urgent impulse to be present ourselves," and it is very hard to see how such people can be willing to leave the hoped-for reunion "to other hands than their own."

In complete contrast with these statements is the belief of Emerson:

"If you love and serve men, you cannot by any hiding or stratagem escape the remuneration. Secret retributions are always restoring the level, when disturbed, of the divine justice. It is impossible to tilt the beam. All the tyrants and proprietors and monopolists of the world in vain set their shoulders to heave the bar. Settles forevermore the ponderous equator to its line, and man and mote, and star and sun, must range to it, or be pulverized by the recoil." Lectures and Biogr. Sket., 1868, p. 186.

Note 10. Compare the statement of Sidgwick, *Methods*, 438:

"And, therefore, I should judge, from a strictly utilitarian point of view, that any attempt, such as Bentham made, to dispense with the morality of instinct and tradition, would be premature and ill-advised."

Note 11. From a passage in the *Souvenirs* it appears that, as man is duped by Nature, so Nature in turn may be duped by man. The following story is put in the mouth of Renan's mother, but she is plainly expressing his own views:

"Tout n'est au fond qu'une grande illusion, et ce qui le prouve, c'est que, dans beaucoup de cas, rien n'est plus facile que de duper la nature par des singeries qu'elle ne sait pas distinguer de la réalité. Je n'oublierai jamais la fille de Marzin. . . qui, folle par suppression du sentiment maternel, prenait une bûche, l'emballottait de chiffons, lui mettait un semblant de bonnet d'enfant, puis passait les jours à dorloter dans ses bras ce poupon fictif, à le bercer, à le serrer contre son sein, à le couvrir de baisers. . . Il y a des instincts pour qui l'apparence suffit et qu'on endort par des fictions. . . Que veux-tu! Ces pauvres folles prouvent par leurs égarements les saintes lois de la nature et leur inévitable fatalité." *Souv.*, 41-2.

Note 11a. An interesting comparison at this point is again furnished by Prof. James. Commenting on the favorite utterance of Margaret Fuller: "I accept the universe," and Carlyle's sardonic reply: "Gad! she'd better!" he writes:

"At bottom the whole concern of both morality and religion is with the manner of our acceptance of the universe. Do we accept it only in part and grudgingly, or heartily and altogether? . . . Morality pure and simple accepts the law of the whole which it finds reigning, so far as to acknowledge and obey it, but it may obey it with the heaviest and coldest heart, and never cease to feel it as a yoke. But for religion, in its strong and well-developed manifestations, the service of the higher never is felt as a yoke. Dull submission is left far behind, and a mood of welcome, which may fill any place on the scale between cheerful serenity and enthusiastic gladness, has taken its place. . . It makes a tremendous emotional and practical difference to one whether one accept the universe in the drab discolored way of stoic resignation to necessity, or with the passionate happiness of christian saints." *Var. Rel. Exp.*, 41.

Note 12. "The assertion that mortality is in any way dependent on certain philosophical problems," says Prof. Huxley, "produces the same effect on my mind as if one should say that a man's vision depends on his theory of sight, or that he has no business to be sure that ginger is hot in his mouth, unless he has formed definite views as to the nature of ginger."

"If it is demonstrated that without this or that theological dogma the human race will lapse into bipedal cattle, more brutal than the beasts by reason of their greater cleverness, my next question is to ask for the proof of the dogma. If this proof is forthcoming, it is my conviction that no drowning sailor ever clutched a hencoop more tenaciously than mankind will hold by such dogma, whatever it may

be. But if not, then I verily believe that the human race will go on its evil way; and my only consolation lies in the reflection that, however bad our posterity may become, so long as they hold by the plain rule of not pretending to believe what they have no reason to believe, because it may be to their advantage so to pretend, they will not have reached the lowest depths of immorality."

In behalf of the same view may be cited one of the greatest names in modern ethics, Prof. Sidgwick:

"I am so far from feeling bound to believe for purposes of practice what I see no ground for holding as a speculative truth, that I cannot even conceive the state of mind which these words seem to describe, except as a momentary, half-wilful irrationality, committed in a violent access of philosophic despair." *Methods*, 5th ed., 507.

Note 13. This remained Renan's attitude, more or less consistently, throughout life. Nature and nurture had combined to inculcate his childhood with a temperamental idealism which not even the rudest reverses of life were able entirely to efface.

Nearly half a century later he writes of himself:

"En fait, je n'ai d'amour que pour les caractères d'un idéalisme absolu, martyrs, héros, utopistes, amis de l'impossible. De ceux-là seuls je m'occupe; ils sont, si j'ose le dire, ma spécialité." *Souv.*, 123.

"Je n'abandonnai nullement mon goût pour l'idéal; je l'ai plus vif que jamais, je l'aurai toujours. Le moindre acte de vertu, le moindre grain de talent, me paraissent infiniment supérieurs à toutes les richesses, à tous les succès du monde." *Souv.*, 122.

Note 13a. "What right have we," asks Dr. Maudsley, "to believe nature under any obligation to do her work by means of complete minds only? She may find an incomplete mind a more suitable instrument for a particular purpose. It is the work that is done, and the quality in the worker by which it was done, that is alone of moment; and it may be no great matter from a cosmical standpoint, if in other qualities of character he was singularly defective,—if indeed he were hypocrite, adulterer, eccentric, or lunatic." Quoted, with approval, by Prof. James, *Var. Rel. Exp.*, 19.

Note 14. "Happiness," says Prof. James, "like every other emotional state, has blindness and insensibility to opposing facts given it as its instinctive weapon for self-protection against disturbance. When happiness is actually in possession, the thought of evil can no more acquire the feeling of reality, than the thought of good can gain reality when melancholy rules. To the man actively happy,

from whatever cause, evil simply cannot then and there be believed in. Var. Rel. Exp., 88; also cf., 90.

But this exactly is the problem, why happiness rather than melancholy should continue in possession.

Renan has attempted himself to explain his constant cheerfulness, but as usual his explanations do not agree very well with each other. He is specially fond of attributing his temperamental cheerfulness to his descent from a Celtic ancestry. Disc., 217.

"Je suis double," he writes in the *Souvenirs*, "quelque fois une partie de moi rit quand l'autre pleure. C'est là l'explication de ma gaîté. Comme il y a deux hommes en moi, il y en a toujours un qui a lieu d'être content." p., 145.

The explanation offered in the *Souvenirs* is more serious, and on the whole, correct:

"Ma paix d'esprit est parfaite. D'un autre côté, j'ai trouvé une bonté extrême dans la nature et dans la société. . . Je n'ai rencontré sur mon chemin que des hommes excellents. . . Une bonne humeur, difficilement altérable, résultat d'une bonne santé morale, résultat elle-même d'une âme bien équilibrée et d'un corps supportable malgré ses défauts, m'a jusqu'ici maintenu dans une philosophie tranquille, soit qu'elle se traduise en optimisme reconnaissant, soit qu'elle aboutisse à une ironie gaie. Je n'ai jamais beaucoup souffert." p. 374.

Note 15. It would not be hard to find in Renan's books many other passages in which the same doctrine is expressed or implied. Here, e. g., is another from the *Souvenirs*:

"Et maintenant je ne demande plus au bon génie qui m'a tant de fois guidé, conseillé, consolé, qu'une mort douce et subite, pour l'heure qui m'est fixée, proche ou lointaine. Les stoiciens soutenaient qu'on a pu mener la vie bienheureuse dans le ventre du taureau de Phalaris. C'est trop dire. La douleur abaisse, humilie, porte à blasphémer. La seule mort acceptable est la mort noble, qui est non un accident pathologique, mais une fin voulue et précieuse devant l'Eternel. La mort sur le champ de bataille est la plus belle de toutes, etc. Souv., 376.

Note 16. It is from this point of view that we must interpret Renan's frequent suspicions that morality and religion may be nothing more, after all, than cosmic illusions. In the course of evolution only such traits of mind and character have come down to our own times as were not incompatible with the requirements of successful life

under set cosmic conditions. This is concisely and clearly expressed in the following passage:

"Une humanité plus intelligente, où tous verraient clair, ne serait pas viable; elle périrait dans son germe même, et par conséquent elle n'existe pas." Dial., 30.

Note 17. The same attitude appears to have been taken by Renan during the siege of Paris, in 1870. The *Journal* of the Goncourts records the following scene:

"Berthelot continue ses révélations désolantes, au bout desquelles je m'écrie: 'Alors tout est fini, il ne nous reste plus qu'à élever une génération pour la vengeance'"—"Non, non, crie Renan, qui s'est levé, la figure toute rouge, pas la vengeance, périsse la France, périsse la patrie, il y a au-dessus le Royaume du Devoir, de la Raison."—"Non, non, hurle toute la table, il n'y a rien au-dessus de la patrie . . ." Renan s'est levé et se promène autour de la table, la marche mal équilibrée, ses petits bras battant l'air, citant à haute voix des fragments de l'Écriture sainte, en disant que tout est là." E. de Goncourt, *Journal*, 2 série, I vol., p. 28. But cf. Renan's letters to M. Strauss, written at this time; also Séailles, E. R., 265, note 1.

Note 18. Renan's progress from radicalism to conservatism can be broadly traced in his attitude towards the French Revolution at different periods of his life. In the *Avenir de la science* he is still a fervent admirer of that great event, as appears from the following foot-note:

"L'année 1789 sera dans l'histoire de l'humanité une année sainte. . . Le lieu où l'humanité s'est proclamée, le Jeu de Paume, sera un jour un temple; on y viendra comme à Jérusalem, quand l'éloignement aura sanctifié et caractérisé les faits particuliers en symboles des faits généraux. Le Golgotha ne devint sacré que deux ou trois siècles après Jésus." A. S., note 6.

The same attitude is taken in his letters during the period between his apostacy from the church in 1845 and the *coup d'état* of 1851: In a letter from St. Malo, for example, Sept., 1847, to his friend Berthelot, he gravely argues: If the sublimities of the christian religion have prevailed over its narrowness and its primitive superstitions, why should the sublimity of the Revolution be unable to efface its horrors? The critic will see both sides, to be sure, as he sees them both in christianity; but the religionist will see only the sublime, just as in christianity. Corr., 32.

With this youthful enthusiasm we may contrast what he has to say on the same subject in 1858, in his article on M. Cousin:

"Au fond, la Révolution française, qu'on prend toujours comme un fait général de l'histoire du monde (Hégel lui-même a commis cette erreur), est un fait très particulier à la France, un fait gaulois, si j'ose le dire, la conséquence de cette vanité qui fait que le gaulois supporte tout, excepté l'inégalité des rangs sociaux, et de cette logique absolue qui le porte à réformer la société sur un type abstrait,—again like himself in the A. S.,—sans tenir compte de l'histoire et des droits consacrés." *Mor. Crit.*, 98-9. *Cf. Q. C.*, III-IV, 86, 380; also *Réf. int.*, 248.

From a passage in the *Souvenirs* it appears that his early enthusiasm for the Revolution was caught from his mother, and that he was well aware of the inconsistency of his statements in regard to it:

"J'ai pris d'elle un goût invincible de la Révolution, qui me l'a fait aimer malgré ma raison et malgré tout le mal que j'ai dit d'elle. Je n'efface rien de ce que j'ai dit; mais, depuis que je vois l'espèce de rage avec laquelle des écrivains étrangers cherchent à prouver que la Révolution française n'a été que honte, folie, et qu'elle constitue un fait sans importance dans l'histoire du monde, je commence à croire que c'est peut-être ce que nous avons fait de mieux, puisqu'on en est si jaloux." *Souv.*, 105.

We may note, too, in passing, that Renan's early radicalism in matters of social policy was simply the application to secular institutions of that same intellectual temper of ultra-rationalism which had recently forced him out of the church. Indeed, we should hardly expect a young man who had just set aside the supposedly sacred authorities and traditions of the church, to show much respect for authority and tradition in secular matters.

He was certainly influenced, too, in these matters, during the years immediately following his withdrawal from the church, by his intimate relations with the young Berthelot. It was in the autumn of 1845 that they first made each other's acquaintance. Renan was 22 years old, and Berthelot 18, and so completely did they stand at the same point of view, that friendship at once became a kind of intellectual partnership.

"Notre ardeur d'apprendre était égale; nos cultures avaient été très diverses. Nous mîmes en commun tout ce que nous savions; . . . Berthelot m'apprit ce qu'on n'enseignait pas au séminaire; de mon côté, je me mis en devoir de lui apprendre la théologie et l'hébreu. . . . Notre honnêteté et notre droiture s'embrassèrent. . . . Nos discussions étaient sans fin. . . . Nous passions une partie des nuits à chercher, à travailler ensemble. . . . La crise de 1848 nous émut profondément. . . . Notre amitié consista en ce que nous nous aprenions mutuellement, en une sorte de commune fermentation qu'une

remarquable conformité d'organisation intellectuelle produisait en nous devant les mêmes objets. Ce que nous avons vu à deux nous paraissait certain. . . Il faut que les questions sociales et philosophiques soient bien difficiles, pour que nous ne les ayons pas résolues dans notre effort désespéré." Souv., 334-7.

The results of this co-operative intellectual fermentation are preserved in Renan's *Avenir de la science*, that great *Pourana*, as he himself calls it, from which most of his later inspirations were drawn. A. S., XI. Cf. Séailles, *W. R.*, 40-1.

Renan's radicalism was destined to be short-lived, however. The events of 1848 had already shaken rudely his confidence in democracy, and the *coup d'état* of 1851 destroyed it completely. A. S., IV.

His mission to Italy, moreover, during 1849-50, besides developing new interests and awakening his artistic instinct, had taught him the valuable lesson that different peoples need different institutions, and that a government which is good for one country may be very bad for another. Within a year after writing the *Avenir de la science* he had so far changed his ground, he himself tells us, especially with reference to socialism, that he wondered how he ever embraced the views so enthusiastically espoused in that work. It was for this reason among others that the book was not published till more than forty years later. A. S., IX.

Note 19. This attitude seems at first glance to be contradicted by his unlimited admiration of all the forms of culture achieved by ancient Athens. Souv., 57-72. But Athenian democracy, as he expressly admits in that famous rhapsody, was virtually an aristocracy, based on slavery.

"Il y a eu un peuple d'aristocrates, un public tout entier composé de connaisseurs, une démocratie qui a saisi des nuances d'art tellement fines que nos raffinés les aperçoivent à peine. Il y a eu un public pour comprendre ce qui fait la beauté des Propylées et la supériorité des sculptures du Parthénon." Souv., 61.

Note 20. Renan's conception of civil liberty coincides exactly with that of Herbert Spencer:

"La liberté, c'est le droit qu'a tout homme de croire et de faire ce que bon lui semble dans les limites où le droit semblable des autres n'est point atteint." Mor. Crit., 159.

Note 20a. "L'inégalité est légitime toutes les fois que l'inégalité est nécessaire au bien de l'humanité. Une société a droit à ce qui est nécessaire à son existence, quelque apparente injustice qui en

résulte pour l'individu. . . La possibilité et les besoins de la société, les intérêts de la civilisation priment tout le reste. . . Je vais jusqu'à dire que, si jamais l'esclavage a pu être nécessaire à l'existence de la société, l'esclavage a été légitime; car alors les esclaves ont été esclaves de l'humanité, esclaves de l'oeuvre divine, ce qui ne répugne pas plus que l'existence de tant d'êtres attachés fatalement au joug d'une idée qui leur est supérieure et qu'ils ne comprennent pas. A. S., 378-9. Cf. *ibid.*, notes 156 and 157:

"On est parfois tenter de se demander si l'humanité n'a pas été trop tôt émancipée. . . Comment fera l'humanité, avec une liberté individuelle aussi développée que la nôtre, pour conquérir les déserts? . . . Les grandes choses ne se font pas sans sacrifice, et la religion, conseillère des sacrifices, n'est plus! Je me berce parfois de l'espoir que les machines et les progrès de la science appliquée compenseront un jour ce que l'humanité aura perdu d'aptitude au sacrifice par le progrès de la réflexion."

This doctrine was often reaffirmed by Renan in his later period, and is developed at length in his *Dialogues* and his *Drames*.

The practice of vivisection, and the killing of animals for food, is justified by Renan on the same general ground as slavery:

"Les animaux qui servent à la nourriture de l'homme de génie ou de l'homme de bien devraient être contents, s'il savaient à quoi ils servent. Tout dépend du but, et si un jour la vivisection sur une grande échelle était nécessaire pour découvrir les grands secrets de la nature vivante, j'imagine les êtres, dans l'extase du martyr volontaire, venant s'y offrir couronnés de fleurs. Le meurtre inutile d'une mouche est un acte blâmable; celui qui est sacrifié aux fins idéales n'a pas droit de se plaindre, et son sort, au regard de l'infini ($\tau\tilde{\omega} \ \Sigma\epsilon\tilde{\omega}$), est digne d'envie." Dial., 129-30. Cf. A. S., IX, 387.

But Renan himself has repeatedly asserted, both before and after writing this passage, that these transcendental ends are not known, and very probably cannot be known:

"Rien ne nous indique quelle est la volonté de la nature, ni le but de l'univers." A. S., XVI. Cf. Frag., 318-9.

Taking the two statements together, it would seem that he is himself refuting the very proposition which his arguments are intended to establish. For if the sacrifice of individual lives and liberties is legitimate only when made for certain supposedly transcendental ends of Nature, it would seem that these ends must be known before the sacrifice can be legitimate. It must be admitted that Renan's idealism, in the present instance again, is more beautiful than true.

Note 21. That this is not merely the doctrine of one of Renan's characters but truly his own, is shown by the following passages from his article on Amiel:

"Les sociétés de tempérance reposent sur d'excellentes intentions, mais sur un malentendu. Je ne connais qu'un argument en leur faveur. M. T. . . me disait un jour que les maris de certains pays, quand ils n'ont pas été tempérants, battent leurs femmes. Voilà qui est horrible, assurément; il faudrait tâcher de corriger cela. Mais, au lieu de supprimer l'ivresse pour ceux qui en ont besoin, ne vaudrait-il pas mieux essayer de la rendre douce, aimable, accompagnée de sentiments moraux? Il y a tant d'hommes pour lesquels l'heure de l'ivresse est, après l'heure de l'amour, le moment où ils sont les meilleurs." F. Dét., 383-4.

In the following passage he attempts to defend this attitude on philosophical grounds:

"Eh bien! l'état d'âme que M. Amiel appelle dédaigneusement. "l'épicurisme de l'imagination" n'est peut-être pas, pour cela, un mauvais parti. La gaieté a cela de très philosophique qu'elle semble dire à la nature que nous ne la prenons pas plus au sérieux qu'elle ne nous prend nous-mêmes.; si le monde est une mauvaise farce, par la gaieté nous la rendons bonne. D'un autre côté, si une pensée indulgente et bienveillante préside à l'univers, nous entrons bien mieux par la résignation joyeuse dans les intentions de cette pensée suprême, que par la morne raideur du sectaire et l'éternelle jérémiade du croyant." F. Dét., 396-7.

And again:

"Amiel se demande avec inquiétude: Qu'est-ce qui sauve? Eh! mon Dieu! c'est ce qui donne à chacun son motif de vivre. Le moyen de salut n'est pas le même pour tous. Pour l'un, c'est la vertu; pour l'autre, l'ardeur du vrai; pour un autre, l'amour de l'art; pour d'autres, la curiosité, l'ambition, les voyages, le luxe, les femmes, la richesse; au plus bas degré, la morphine et l'alcool. Les hommes vertueux trouvent leur récompense dans la vertu même; ceux qui ne le sont pas ont le plaisir." F. Dét., 382-3.

In spite of the offensively frivolous tone of these passages,—and they might easily be multiplied,—there is a grain of truth in Renan's contention. This is more clearly and less objectionably put by Prof. James:

"The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands,

unites, and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth. Not through mere perversity do men run after it. To the poor and the unlettered it stands in the place of symphony concerts and of literature; and it is part of the deeper mystery and tragedy of life that whiffs and gleams of something that we immediately recognize as excellent should be vouchsafed to so many of us only in the fleeting earlier phases of what in its totality is so degrading and poisoning. The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness, and our total opinion of it must find its place in our opinion of that larger whole." Var. Rel. Exp., 387.

Note 22. "L'impossibilité où il se voyait de plus en plus de faire des sottises l'autorisait à dire toute celles qui lui passaient par la tête; il se rendait cette justice qu'il n'avait fait aucun mal; il ne songeait pas qu'écrire, c'est agir, et qu'on a sa part des fautes de tous ceux dont on affaiblit la conscience et la volonté." E. R. XII. Also 292.

In reply one might quote from Renan:

"Tout ce qui élève l'homme et le ramène au soin de son âme l'améliore et l'épure; la qualité des doctrines importe assez peu. Les lecteurs capables de trouver du goût à un écrit, sont capables aussi d'en découvrir le venin, s'il y en a." Mor. Crit., VII. Cf., Dial., 32-40; Eccl., 88; F. Dét., 426-7. Souv. 149-50.

But such statements, even if they were quite true, would not remove the objection; and for once there can be no doubt that Renan is wrong and his critic right.

Note 22a. Compare the statement of Amiel:

"Juger notre époque au point de vue de l'histoire universelle, l'histoire au point de vue de périodes géologiques, la géologie au point de vue de l'astronomie, c'est un affranchissement pour la pensée. Quand la durée d'une vie d'homme ou de peuple nous apparaît aussi microscopique que celle d'un moucheron, et, inversement, la vie d'un éphémère aussi infinie que celle d'un corps céleste avec toute sa poussière de nations, nous nous sentons bien petits et bien grands, et nous pouvons dominer de toute la hauteur des sphères notre propre existence et les petits tourbillons qui agitent notre petite Europe." Journ., Jl. 20, 1848.

Note 23. For the general question of heterogeneous personalities, the reader is referred to James, Var. Rel. Exp., 166-'88. *The divided*

self and the process of its unification, and to the numerous references there given to other treatments of the same subject.

Note 24. This same doctrine of objective reason as being "not merely the only legitimate source of belief, which perhaps it may be, but the only source of legitimate beliefs, which it assuredly is not," is clearly expressed also in his article *L'Examen de conscience philosophique*, 1888:

"Le premier devoir de l'homme sincère est de ne pas influencer sur ses propres opinions, de laisser la réalité se refléter en lui comme en la chambre noire du photographe. . . . Devant les modifications internes de notre rétine intellectuelle, nous devons rester passifs. . . . Nous n'avons pas le droit d'avoir un désir, quand la raison parle; nous devons écouter, rien de plus; prêts à nous laisser traîner pieds et poings liés où les meilleurs arguments nous entraînent. La production, de la vérité est un phénomène objectif, étranger au moi, qui se passe en nous sans nous, une sorte de précipité chimique que nous devons nous contenter de regarder avec curiosité." F. Dët., 401-2.

In accordance with this theory Renan believed that the progress of reason is inevitable and irresistible. No man can choose what he will or will not believe.

"S'il y a quelque chose de fatal au monde, c'est la raison et la science. Les orthodoxes sont vraiment plaisants dans leurs colères contre les libres penseurs, comme s'il avait dépendu d'eux de se développer autrement, comme si l'on était maître de croire ce que l'on veut." A. S., 93. Cf. F. Dët., 402. In recent years this question as to the proper attitude of mind in the pursuit of truth, has been much discussed, especially with reference to the rôle which the will and the intellect respectively play in what may be called the psychology of religious belief. Hermann Lotze seems to have done more than any one else in the last century to inaugurate this reaction against the agnostic doctrine (see his *Microcosmos*, Eng. tr., 4th ed., 1890, vol. 2, pp. 571-8, 659, 678; also the introductory pages of his *Outlines of Philosophy of Religion*). A powerful impetus was given to the movement by Mr. Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*; but perhaps the most lucid discussion in brief compass is that of Prof. James, in his well-known essay *The Will to Believe*.

Note 25. This view of his apostasy conflicts, it is true, with his own account in the *Souvenirs*; but his own version, written some thirty years after the event, seems distorted by historical perspective, or imperfect remembrance:

He is certainly mistaken when he says, for example:

"Ma foi a été détruite par la critique historique, non par la scolastique, ni par la philosophie. L'histoire de la philosophie et l'espèce de scepticisme dont j'étais atteint me retenaient dans le christianisme plutôt qu'elles ne m'en chassaient. Je me répétais souvent ces vers que j'avais lus dans le vieux Brucker:

Discussii fateor, sectas attentius omnes,

Plurima quaesivi, per singula quaeque cucurri,

Nec quidquam inveni melius quam credere Christo." Souv., 258.

"Dans cette grande lutte engagée entre ma raison et mes croyances, j'évitai soigneusement de faire un seul raisonnement de philosophie abstraite. . . Mes raisons furent toutes de l'ordre philologique et critique; elles ne furent nullement de l'ordre métaphysique, de l'ordre politique, de l'ordre moral." Souv. 297-8. Cf. *ibid.*, 286; also *Mor. Cr.*, 174.

These statements must be taken to represent the process as it appeared to his memory in the retrospect, rather than its actual character. A truer account is found in his letters of the time, which are contemporary records, and addressed, not like the *Souvenirs* to a promiscuous public as an *Apologia pro vita sua*, but to the only person in the world to whom he dared reveal the most intimate secrets of his heart, his sister Henriette. It is to this correspondence, where his plans and prospects, his disappointments and his difficulties are frankly discussed, that we must turn for the real causes of his separation from the church.

And from these letters it is very clear that his apostasy was not by any means due, as he insists, exclusively to historical and textual criticism, but quite as much to his readings in philosophy and natural science. For long before he was capable of wielding the weapons of textual criticism, and before he had even begun his studies in biblical philology, he was being incessantly torn by religious doubts of the very gravest nature. Cf. *A. S.*, 49.

As early as March, 1842, before he had begun either Hebrew or German (*Lett. Sém.*, 165, 229), he was already inoculated with the germs of an all-questioning scepticism.

On March 23, 1842, he writes to his sister:

"D'ailleurs, le propre de la philosophie est moins de donner des notions bien assurées, que de lever une foule de préjugés. On est tout étonné, quand on commence à s'y adonner, de voir que jusque-là, on a été le jouet de mille erreurs, enracinées par l'opinion, la coutume, l'éducation." *Lett.* 87; also 122. Cf. *Lett. Sém.*, 164, 175.

Again on Sept. 15 of the same year, he writes:

"On voit les choses d'une manière si différente; on reconnaît tant de préjugés et d'erreurs, là où l'on ne croyait voir que vérité, qu'on serait tenter d'embrasser un scepticisme universel. C'est là la première impression de l'étude de la philosophie." Lett., 96; also 100.

And that it was not merely his secular beliefs that had grown uncertain, but his religious creed as well, appears clearly from another passage in the same letter, where he discusses the choice of a vocation. Declaring that he was not intended for a secular calling, he continues:

"Je ne dis pas ceci par le zèle d'une dévotion spirituelle: oh! non; ce n'est plus là mon défaut; la philosophie est merveilleusement propre à en corriger les excès, et une réaction trop violente est seule à craindre." Lett., 100.

Even in the *Souvenirs* itself there are passages in which the influence of philosophy is explicitly recognized as an important factor in the destruction of his faith; as for example the following:

"La contradiction des travaux philosophiques ainsi entendu avec la foi chrétienne ne m'apparaissait point encore avec le degré de clarté qui bientôt ne devait laisser à mon esprit aucun choix entre l'abandon du christianisme et l'inconséquence la plus inavouable." Souv., 247; also 251; Cf. St. Beuve, *Nouv. Lund.*, Je. 2, 1862; *N. Am. Rev.*, 48-63ff.

But the most glaring discrepancy appears in his attempt to account for the persistent orthodoxy of one of his teachers, the erudite M. Lehir. The question could scarcely fail to present itself to his mind: If the study of biblical criticism proved so disastrous to the faith of the student, why was the teaching of it compatible with the faith of the professor?

"La vérité de l'orthodoxie," he writes of M. Lehir, "ne fut jamais pour lui l'objet d'un doute. . . Tout à fait étranger à la philosophie naturelle et à l'esprit scientifique, dont la première condition est de n'avoir aucune foi préalable et de rejeter ce qui n'arrive pas, il resta dans cette équilibre où une conviction moins ardente eût trébuché. Le surnaturelle ne lui causait aucune répugnance intellectuelle." Souv., 274; Cf. *A. S.*, 49.

The explanation is probably correct; but does it not involve the open admission that foremost among the causes of his own defection were "la philosophie naturelle et l'esprit scientifique," and a "répugnance intellectuelle" against supernaturalism? Cf. Lett. Sém., 5, 15, 16, 41.

The truth is, when Renan entered upon his theological studies at St Sulpice, in Sep. 1843, he was virtually a disbeliever already. From the very first the *onus probandi* was thrown on Christianity. That

was important. There is all the difference in the world between believing a creed until disproven, and disbelieving it until proven; and there can be no doubt whatever that the latter was Renan's attitude towards the Christian creed at the beginning of his theological studies.

It cannot be true then, that his faith was destroyed by textual criticism of the bible, for the excellent reason that none remained to be destroyed. All that was left for philology to do was to ripen the seed that philosophy and science had sown. And that it promptly did. By destroying the prestige of a supposedly infallible scripture, philology dethroned the last authority which still subdued his reason and restrained his will. But even here there were powerful allies. Renan ceased to acknowledge the authority of the scriptures not merely because of errors and contradictions in the text, but also, as he very significantly observes in one of his letters of the time, because an inspired book would be a miracle. *Souv.*, 293-5; *Cf. Dial.* 14-22.

That was decisive. To imply a miracle was to assail his most cherished conviction, the reign of law, and to assert an impossible absurdity. *Dial.*, 14-22. In his mind, the impossibility of miracle had come to be more than a mere doctrine; it had acquired all the fixity of a mental category. Nothing could have prevailed at this period against his worship of reason. Had he witnessed a genuine miracle with his own eyes he would certainly have declared it hallucination or imposture rather than admit that the causal nexus of nature had been broken through.

Indeed, were any specific belief to be named as the cause of his leaving the church, it would be this belief in the universality of irrefragable natural law. In point of fact, however, no one such specific belief can be named. He is much nearer the truth when he says:

"Mes doutes ne vinrent pas d'un raisonnement, ils vinrent de dix mille raisonnements." *Souv.*, 284-5; *Mor. Cr.*, 174.

His entire disposition and method had led to this crisis. It was not so much his disbelief in any particular dogma that made it impossible for him to abide by the creed; it was the rationalism and the unfinality of his whole intellectual temper. *Cf. James, Var. Rel. Exp.*, pp. 73-74.

Half a century later, looking back upon this intellectual hypertrophy of his earlier period, he refers to himself humorously as

"Un jeune homme, atteint d'une forte encéphalite, vivant uniquement dans sa tête et croyant frénétiquement à la vérité." *A. S.*, VI.

Note 26. Renan has made repeated confession of his own disappointment with his labors in history:

Je crains fort que nos écrits de précision de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, destinées à donner quelque exactitude à l'histoire, ne pourissent avant d'avoir été lus. C'est par la chimie à un bout, par l'astronomie à un autre, c'est surtout par la physiologie générale que nous tenons vraiment le secret de l'être, du monde, de Dieu, comme on voudra l'appeler. Le regret de ma vie est d'avoir choisi pour mes études un genre de recherches qui ne s'imposera jamais et restera toujours à l'état d'intéressantes considérations sur une réalité à jamais disparue." Souv., 263. See also his letter to M. Berthelot, Aug., 1863, in the *Frag.*, 153-4; also *Disc.*, 134-5; A. S., XIV.

One of his latest expressions of opinion as to the probable future of historical science occurs in his preface to the *Avenir de la science* 1890:

"Les sciences historiques et leurs auxiliaires, les sciences philologiques, ont fait d'immenses conquêtes depuis que je les embrassai avec tant d'amour il y a quarante ans. Mais on en voit le bout. Dans un siècle, l'humanité saura à peu près ce qu'elle peut savoir sur son passé. . . Le processus de la civilisation est reconnu dans ses lois générales. L'inégalité des races est constatée. Les titres de chaque famille humaine à des mentions plus ou moins honorables dans l'histoire du progrès sont à peu près déterminés." A. S., XIV.

For a critical estimate of Renan as an historian, see the discussion of M. Ch. Seignobos, *Hist. lang. litt. fr.*, t. VIII, 259-267. Also the estimate of M. Faguet in the same volume.

Note 27. This is a very interesting confession; but does it really conform to his own canon of objective reason? Dès lors la Vie de Jésus était écrite dans mon esprit." That is to say, fifteen years before it was written the *Vie de Jésus* was complete in his mind. The statement is doubtless true, and accounts for the fact, patent to all readers, that the character of Renan's Jesus so much resembles Renan. But how are we to reconcile this confession with his doctrine that truth must be a product of objective reason, as impartial and impersonal as a chemical precipitate Cf. F. Dét. 401-2; also Souv., 274: "L'esprit scientifique, dont la première condition est de n'avoir aucune foi préalable."

Is it not palpably plain that in this matter again Renan's theory is one thing and his practice quite another? Or rather his theory itself is many things; for a doctrine fundamentally opposed to the "chemical precipitate" theory is affirmed no less often.

"La foi et l'amour, en apparence sans lien avec l'intelligence, sont le vrai fondement de la certitude morale et l'unique moyen qu'a

l'homme de comprendre quelque chose au problème de son origine et de sa destinée." *Mor. Crit.* II.

Is not this the most subjective conceivable conception of truth?

But why dwell longer on these perpetual contradictions? Is Renan alone, after all, in falling thus short of his own ideals? Let the consistent man, if he knows himself, throw the first stone! In the present instance, Renan is the more pardonable as the ideal to be attained is probably a mere fiction. For the truth seems to be, as Mr. Balfour and others have tried to show, that the doctrine of an objective reason, universally applied, is itself an unrealized—and perhaps unrealizable—subjective ideal.

APPENDIX B: BIBLIOGRAPHY.

The number of books, pamphlets and magazine articles written about Renan is of course much too large to be catalogued here. Most of them, especially those provoked by the *Vie de Jésus*, are of a controversial nature, and give little or no help towards a comprehension of Renan and his work. Among the best are the following:

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- Poole's Index to Periodical Literature, 1802, to date. There is now a very convenient abridgment of this work covering the period from 1815-1899 in a single volume.
- Cumulative Index to a Selected list of Periodicals (for current numbers).
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IV. GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES.

The best general bibliography of Renan in existence is that of Mr. John P. Anderson, of the British Museum, which was published as an Appendix to *The Life of Ernest Renan*, by Fr. Espinasse, Lond., 1895.

In this work are listed, in chronological order, the various editions of Renan's writings, down to 1895; and a very extensive catalogue is given of books on Renan, in the various languages of Europe, besides a large number of articles from English and French magazines.

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Janin, Cl.: Le livre, à propos d'une édition d'art de la Prière sur l'acropole, in the Gazette des Beaux Arts, third series, vol. 24, pp. 253-264, Paris, 1900.

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APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS EMPLOYED, AND EDITIONS QUOTED.

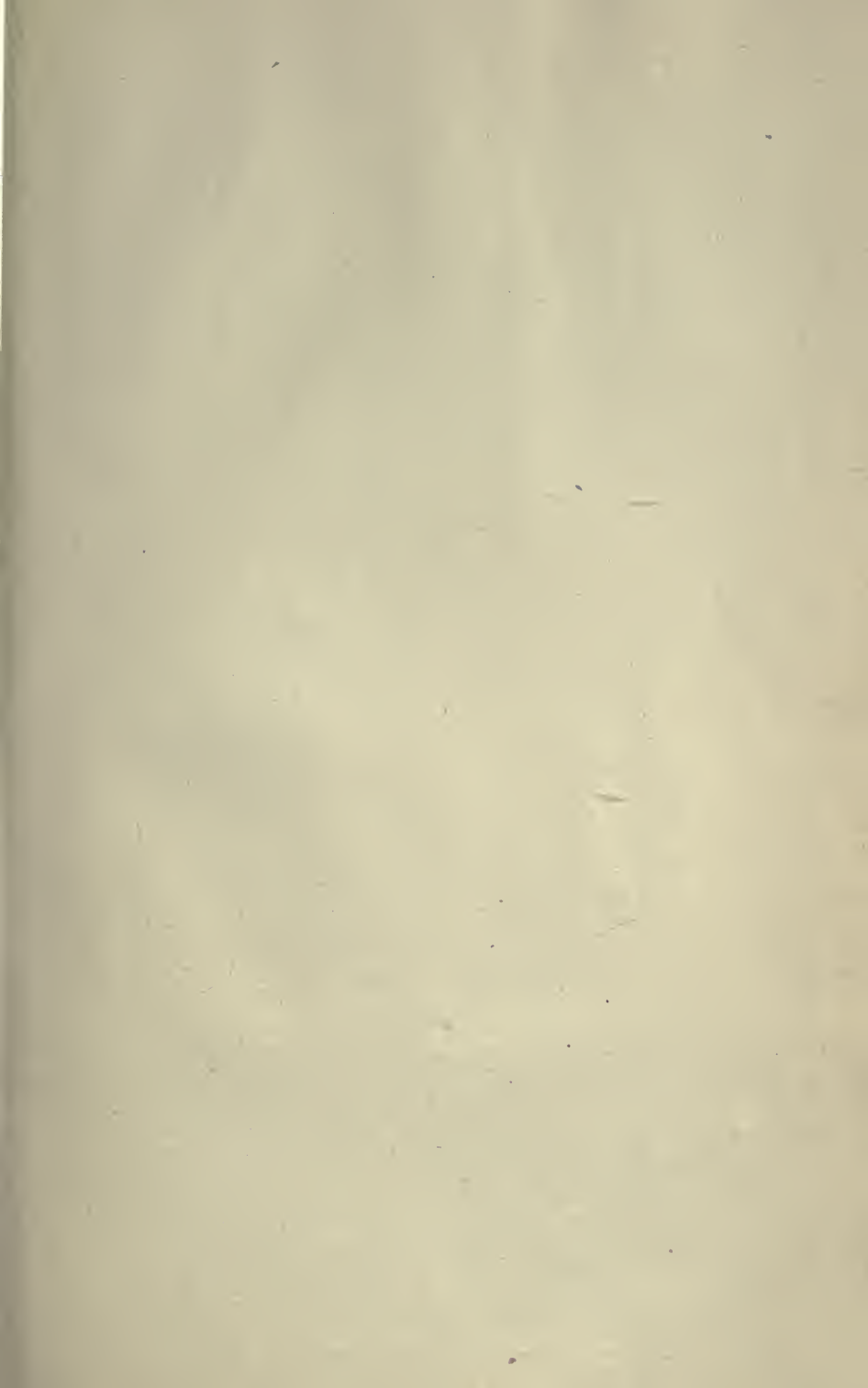
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